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THE MORTAL GODS

OLIVE TILFORD DARGAN

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THE MORTAL GODS
AND OTHER PLAYS

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THE MORTAL GODS
AND
OTHER PLAYS
BY
OLIVE TILFORD DARGAN

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1912

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CONTENTS

THE MORTAL GODS	1
A SON OF HERMES	107
KIDMIR	221

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THE MORTAL GODS

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

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CHARACTERS OF THE PLAY

HUDIBRAND, *King of Assaria*
HERNDA, *his daughter*
CHARTRIEN, *a Prince of Assaria*
BORDUC, *Prime Minister*
COUNT DORKINSKI, *Court Chamberlain*

CORDIAZ, *King of Goldusan*
MEGARIO, *Governor of Peonia, a province of Goldusan*
REJAN LEVAL, *a revolutionist*
SEÑORA ZIRALAY, *his sister*
ZIRALAY
RUBIREZ
GOLIFET
MAZARAN
GUILDAMOUR
} *nobles of Goldusan*

MASIO
GARZA
GONZALO
YSOBEL
GRIJA
COQURIEZ
IPARRO
} *of Megario's hacienda*

Guests, officers, musicians, peons, &c.

TIME: *Begins February*, 1911
PLACE: *Assaria; Goldusan*

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ACT I

SCENE: *A vast room in the palace of Hudibrand. As the curtain rises the place is in darkness save for a circlet of gold apparently suspended in mid-air near the centre of the room. As the light increases, the outline of a man's figure becomes distinguishable, and the circlet is seen to be resting on his head. Gradually the rim of gold fades to invisibility, while the figure of the man and the contents of the room become clear to the eye. The man might be mistaken for an American citizen in customary evening dress. He is Hudibrand.*

At the left are two entrances, upper and lower. Rear, left, large windows. The wall rear makes a right angle about centre, the apex of which is cut off by a window. Right of centre the room seems to extend endlessly rearward, and is arranged to suggest an upland grove in the delicate, venturing days of spring. The ground, rising a little toward right, is covered with winter moss and tufts of short silvered grass. The trees are young birch, slight maples in coral leaf, cornel in flower, and an occasional dark foil of cedar. A brooklet ripples down the slope and off rear. Birds chirp and flit, and now and then a breeze stirs the grove as if it were one tender body. The lights are arranged to give the effect of night or day as one wishes.

It is winter without, the climate of Assaria's capital city being similar to that of New York.

Double doors lower right, through which Count Dorkinski enters to Hudibrand.

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Dor. Your majesty, Sir Borduc has arrived.
Hudi. Hot-shod. We'll let him cool.
Dor. Where shall he wait,
My lord?
Hud. His usual corner. Keep him off
My Delhi rug.
[*Exit Dorkinski*]
Poor Bordy's fuming ripe.
[*Re-enter the Count*]
Dor. His Excellency calls, your majesty.
Hud. Which Excellency? They are thick as hops.
Dor. The Governor of Peonia.
Hud. In time and tune.
We'll see him here.
[*Exit Dorkinski*]
A pawn of mine who'd push
Beyond his square, and I must humor him
'Neath meditative thumb.
[*Enter Megario*]
Hud. Welcome, Megario.
Meg. I've travelled far
To press your hand.
Hud. We made appointment here,
Knowing your visit to Assaria touched
Nothing of state or office.
Meg. [*Accepting his cue*] Nothing, sir.
[*Looks about him*]
I thought I left the springtide in my rear,
Three thousand miles or so, but here it greets me.
Hud. A gimcrack of my daughter's. She would freak
With sun and time. My toyshop has no walls.
I juggle too with seasons, climates, zones,
But in the open where there's warrior room,
And startled Fate may spring against my will,
Giving an edge to mastery when I wrest

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The whip from Nature, turn it on herself,
And set her elemental slaves to filch
Her gold for me. That, friend, is play.
Meg. For gods
And not as thief, but as divinity,
You take from crouching Nature.
Hud. Men have said
I pile up gold because its glitter soothes
A fever in my eyes. The clacking fools!
I am no Cheops making warts on earth.
No mummy brain! God built my pyramids,
Slaving through dark and chaos till there rose
My iron-hearted hills, and mountains locked
On age-unyielded treasure waiting me.
There slept my gems till longing became fire
And broke the grip of stone,—there lay my gold,
Re-purged each thousand years till baited Time
Gave up the master's hour.

[*Hernda has come from the grove and moves up to his side*]

Her. [*Adoringly*] And you the master!
Hud. Daughter, you owe my lord Megario
Some pretty thanks.
Her. I give them, sir.
Meg. No, no!
I pray your Highness, no! My thanks to earth
That bears the flower of you, and to the light
That makes my eyes your beauty's treasurer,
But thanks from you to me, as jewels hung
Upon a beggar's neck, would set my rags
Unkindly in the sun.
Her. Then I am not
Your debtor?
Meg. Mine the debt, that mounts too fast
For feeble payment from thin purse of words.

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Ah, every moment adds a suitor hope
To th' bankrupts in my heart.
Her. I fear, my lord,
Your coiner's name is Fancy, and I like
Truth's mintage best. [*To her father*]
What is this debt of mine,
So languished that a word of thanks may be
Its slender cover?
Meg. A word, if beauty speak it,
May mantle a bare world.
Hud. His Excellency
Is Governor of Peonia——
Her. In Goldusan!
Hud. And smoothed my road there——
Meg. Nay, your majesty,
My aid was but a garnish on the might
That moves with your own name.
Hud. Between us then,
We saved my holdings through a bluster there,
And what they brought me I've tossed here to make
This smile on winter.
Meg. What? You gave her all?
Her. How, sir? One word of mine would robe a world,
And my whole self not worth a little spot
Twitched from Spring's garment?
Meg. Oh, I'd grind the stars
To imperial dust that you might trample them,—
But this—this was a *fortune!*
[*To Hudibrand*] Sir, 'tis true
You care not for the gold.
Hud. I care for it
As men of hero times held dear the sword
That made them lords of battle.
Her. You are lord
Of Peace!

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Meg. Write that upon the clouds, that eyes
Of men and angels may contending claim
The truth for earth and heaven!
Hud. Tush, sir, tush!
Meg. Can I forget how at your kingly touch
My fair Peonia, paling in treason's grip,
Thrilled from her deathward droop, renewed her heart
Through safe, ease-lidded nights, and woke once more
The rose of fortune?
Hud. There's no rumble now
Of riot?
Meg. Not a sound comes to our ears
But from the toiling strokes that steadily
Uproll Peonia's wealth.
Hud. Yet those who led
The last revolt are free.
Meg. Not all, your Highness.
A few crossed to Assaria, but expedition
Warms on their trail. Rejan LeVal is tracked
To your own capital.
Hud. Nay, mend that, sir.
We're safe here from such ruck.
Meg. The startled eel
Will make for muddy waters,—and 'tis sure
LeVal found murky welcome here.
Hud. My city!
What mutinous bolt turns here for him?
Meg. His friends
Are friends of power. How else could he elude
The thousand eyes in search?
Hud. [*Musing*] Treason at court? . . .
Meg. We'll mouse LeVal to 's cranny, do not doubt.
Then we shall ask Assaria's great seal
For his delivery to Goldusan.
Hud. That is assured you.

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Meg. But your minister,
Sir Borduc, warns——
Hud. Ha! Warns?
Meg. He urges that
The extraditing power is at pause,
Blocked by the people's will.
Hud. I've given my word,—
A word that mobbish din ne'er added to,
Nor yet stripped of one letter that I chose
Should spell authority. You ask for more?
Meg. Pardon, your majesty! It is enough,
Beyond all stretch of need.
Hud. I call to mind
That Borduc waits,—and primed for tongue-work too.
The princess will content your Excellency?
Meg. [*With obeisance to Hernda*] 'Tis Heaven's honor!
I have left the earth!
Hud. You waste your art. She's in the milk-maid humor.
Would marry Hob. [*Exit, lower right*]
Meg. The Señor Hob? He says
You'll marry him? [*Hernda laughs*]
You care not if I die!
Her. You'll live, my lord.
Meg. You'll marry Hob. I die!
Her. He is not Hob. That is my father's mock
Because he's poor.
Meg. [*In hope*] Ah, poor?
Her. A beggarly
Ten millions,—not a penny more.
Meg. Ten millions!
Her. But that's my joy. I would not wed for gold.
Meg. O, pity me! I love you, señorita!
Her. No, no! I must not hear that.

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Meg. Then I'll pray
Silence to be my friend and speak my dumb
Unuttered heart.
Her. You must not love me, sir,
But you may love—my father. When you praised him,
You too seemed fair to me.
Meg. I'll sing him till
The stars lie at our feet, if you will listen!
Her. He gave your country peace?
Meg. His royal name
Is dear as Cordiaz' in the grateful heart
Of Goldusan. That proud land lay unkept,
Her ores intombed, her vales without a plough,
Her rivers wasting down to shipless seas,
Her people starving, while her nobles strove
For shreds of power,—the clouted thing we called
A government. Then on our factions fell,
Strong as a god's, the hand of Hudibrand;
And now, compact, we stand by Cordiaz,
While every mountain groans with golden birth,
And every river turns its thousand wheels,
And every valley buried is in bloom.
Her. My dearest father! But I knew 'twas so!
And they who starved are fed and happy now?
They reap the bloom and share the golden flood?
Meg. All will be well when once we've scourged the land
Of rebels that drip poison from their tongues,
Stirring the meek and unambitious poor,—
Who sought no life but saintly, noble toil,—
With strangest rage, till maddened they would bite
The fostering hand of God.
Her. We've prisons where
We put such troublers. Has your land no jails?
Meg. 'Tis full of them! I mean—ah, we have jails,
But foes like these are wary, slip all watch,—

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Flee and dart back, our weariness their charter
To tread with havoc's hoof. If I could find
Rejan LeVal, then might I rest from guard,
But not while he—unlassoed warrigall!—
May canter from his thicket and paw up
Peonia's fields!

Her. I'll lend an adjutant.
Ask Chartrien, who knows each foggy nook
And smirchèd corner of the capital,—
Having once made his pastime serve a quest
For such drab knowledge,—ask him help you find
This traitor.

Meg. Chartrien! Nay, the fox is safe
When th' hound too wears a brush.

Her. You mean the prince?
Speak, sir! Who hints me calumny,
Shall make the drum his chorus. I'll hear all.

Meg. A rumor drifts through Goldusan. . . .

Her. Is that
An oddity? Here rumors are too thick
For ears to gather them.

Meg. But this—O, princess. . . .
Fairest of earth, forgive me that I speak!

Her. You do not speak. And that I'll not forgive.

Meg. Ah, then,—but first,—is Chartrien near the king?

Her. No nearer than his heart.

Meg. I do offend.

Her. Offence now lies in silence. Speak, my lord.

Meg. When I left Goldusan, 'twas said—and with
No muffled hesitance—Prince Chartrien aids
The rebels there, and lays a train to rend
The State apart, that Cordiaz may drop
Into the gap,—then he with plausive cleat
Will make the fissure stanch, and seat himself
In unoppugnèd power.

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Her. Why *he is Hob!*

[*Silence. They both rise*]

A mad and sorry tale, you see.

Meg. I see.

He's in the capital?

Her. Beneath this roof.

The palace is his home. My father holds
His meagre millions guarded, nursing them
To a prince's portion.

Meg. We shall meet?

Her. To-night.

He's with a friend—a Spanish gentleman,—
But *not* from Goldusan.

Meg. I made no guess.

Her. Deny that with your eyes. Your tongue's exempt.

Meg. And may I meet the Spanish gentleman?

Her. That's as he chooses. I may not command him.

[*Re-enter Count Dorkinski*]

Dor. His Highness, sir, is pleased to bid you join him.

Meg. His pleasure is his marshal. [*To Hernda, softly*] I've your leave
To love your father. That I go from you
To him, is Heaven's proof I do.

[*Exit Megario and the Count*]

Her. The proof
I seek, and would not find, is locked in Hell,
Not Heaven. Megario lied. Oh, Chartrien!

[*Retreats slowly into grove and passes out of sight, rear. Enter, upper left, Chartrien and LeVal*]

LeV. No,——

Cha. Prudence, dear LeVal!

LeV. I shall go mad
Shut in this gilded den,—this stifling hold
Of banditry.

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Cha. Peace, friend!
LeV. I'd rather crouch
With brats of grime upon an unswept hearth
And claw my bread from cinders, than draw breath
In this gold-raftered house of blood!
Cha. Come, come!
Your wits fly naked, stripped of every caution,
And beat suspicion up that else might keep
Untroubled bed. Whist! We must move rose-shod
Through these next hours, not clack in passion's clogs.
LeV. I'll out of this! There's surge in me no fear
Can put in bonds.
Cha. Nay, here and here alone
Your life is safe. The hounds of Goldusan
Sniff through the cellars. They'll not scent you in
The royal shadow. That's more brilliancy
Than ever lit a rush in houndom. This
My home, I share with you, for mine it is
Till I've secured my gold from Hudibrand.
LeV. Aÿ, but Megario! While he's here these walls
Pen me in fire.
Cha. His visit is too brief
To be a danger.
LeV. Danger! To me, or him?
If we should meet, his fate as mine would be
In that encounter. These are hands would see to 't!
Cha. LeVal, forget——
LeV. Forget Céleste? My wife?
Forget she died of blows while he stood by
And smiled, because *she was my wife!*
Oh, God! Breathe air with him while this arm hangs
A limp discretion!
Cha. Peace! This mood unpent
Will wreck us. Keep your room if it must swell.
The princess gazes yonder, and your face

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Is badged exposal. Go. I'll meet her question.
'Twill not fash honor if a lie or two
Must be our guard.

[*Exit LeVal upper left. Hernda emerges from grove. Chartrien waits for her as she comes circuitously, lightly hovering and hesitating*]

Her. [*At his side*] What lover's this?—dreams still
When love is by. Were he an olden knight
He'd ride to tourney and forget his spurs!

Cha. He would forget the world and fame and God
To see your eyes like this!

Her. You tremble, Chartrien.
Love so much?—yet stood here just—a stump—

Cha. That felt you coming, coming like a bird,
And watched and waited, envying every bough
Where you paused doubting, till you fluttering lit,
Down in the old stump's heart—

Her. There, I've forgot!
This is my lover ere that lure crept up
From Goldusan. Since you came back, I've felt
The shadow of a difference, and I've heard
The maids of Goldusan can draw men's souls
Out of their bodies for a dance in hell.

Cha. My love!

Her. O, Chartrien, are you mine? I feel
A question in your worship. When your eyes
Are warmest, love lies on them like
The shallow moon-gleam on a deep, dark sea
That is not kin with it. A sea that once
Was mine, and I could go, with circling arms,
Love-lanterned to its depth. But now the dark
Is round me fathomless——

Cha. My own!

Her. I try to rise,
To find my wings—and feel the air again
Without your drowning touch upon me——

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Cha. Hernda!
Have I so nearly lost you? Come, beloved,
Sit here, and let me vow me yours again
Till in each word you feel my beating heart.
Her. My stars shall hear these vows.
[*Changes the light to pale, evening glow. Rear, right, are glimpses of sky with frail, moving clouds, faint stars and a new moon*]
And see, my moon,
Intent and virginal.
[*She sits, and Chartrien lies on the ground, his breast covering her feet*]
Now, now my heart
Holds not another thing but love and you!
Cha. No thought of those dread wings?
Her. None, none! And you?
[*Bends over him*]
All mine. I hold you now, fast in my world.
Sometimes you enter, come within my door,
And then I can not shut it for a wind
That clings about you from a farther sky.
Cha. [*Rises and takes her face between his hands*] There's but one sky!
Her. A shuddering breath,
As from a planet strange, where you have walked
And I shall never go.
Cha. O, shut me in,
Rose of a heart! I'll not go out though Life
Beat at the door, and call her giant storms
To knock upon 't.
Her. Is this not life? And this
The only world?
Cha. The only world. My habitat
One perfect hour.
Her. One hour? Forever, love.

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Cha. O, vow it for me, sweet,—again, again!
Till I believe once more in Arcadies
Born of a silken purse. In sunsets caught
In tinted tapestries, with jacinth heart
Gold-bleeding through the woven breath of dream.
In soft moon-hours that drop from painted skies,
In fairy woodlands aye unwintering,
In love's elf-ring no boding star may cross,
And you, my Hernda, sceptred in joy's name,
Tossing the apple planets in your hands—
These little, sovereign hands—as God might do,
Had he, poor God, your power.
Her. Love, you hurt.
Cha. Ah, tears in Arcady?
Her. Oh, what is this
Has come between us?
Cha. What? The universe.
I can not reach you even when my lips
Are on your heart.
Her. May I not come to you?
Cha. From this moon-world? No hope of that.
Her. See then,
The day! [*Changes the light to sunrise*]
Now may I come?
Cha. Forever playing!
The way lies here.
[*Steps to window and opens it. A snowy blast rushes in*]
Her. Stop, Chartrien! Shut it! Oh,
You've killed my Spring!
Cha. You will not come?
Her. You're mad.
[*Struggles with the window until she closes it, Chartrien watching her*]
Cha. You do not like that road. But it is mine.
And children walk it. I have met them there.

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Her. Oh, I am frozen! See!
Cha. [*With sudden contrition, pressing her to his breast*]
No, you are fire.
A fire that I will clasp, though it should burn
My holiest temple and betray my soul
To ashes!
Her. O, my love, what secret curbs
Your nature to this chafe? It rubs even through
Your ardor,—stabs me on your breast.
May I not know it? Is not confidence
Dear blood and life of love? Without it, ours
Must pale, ghost-cold, a chill between locked arms.
Cha. Is trust not love's prerogative
More royal sweet than any burdened share
Of secrecy?
Her. Not to the strong!
Cha. [*Smiling*] You strong?
By what brave test dost know it?
Her. And by what
Dost know me weak?
Cha. The proof awaits. But now,—
Emilio needs me,—
Her. Go!
Cha. Sweet, friendship too
Has bonds. Not all are love's.
Her. He's ill,—your friend?
Cha. As plague-bit life,—no worse.
Her. You'll wait upon
My father? Bid him but good-night?
Cha. No, Hernda.
Her. You shun him, Chartrien. I have watched you keep
A curious distance,—ay, as though your heart
Removed itself while your unwarmèd eyes
Made invoice of its treasure. Once you rushed

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Unto his counsel as security
Hived in his word, and you, denied, were lost.
Are those hours gone? If you have grown too large
For his shrunk wisdom, bind you to his need.
Age unsuspected crowns him, and you take
Your young arm out of his.
Cha. He wants no staff.
Her. You'll go no more to Goldusan?
Cha. I must.
Her. And soon?
Cha. When Hudibrand is pleased to free
My fortune from his ward.
Her. You want it all?
Cha. Yes, all.
Her. For Goldusan?
Cha. My greatest need
Is there.
Her. What is that need?
Cha. You question me?
Her. May love not ask?
Cha. If love could understand.
Her. Have I grown dull? I do not know you, Chartrien.
You're so unfeatured by that Spanish cloud,
You're lowering friend. *He* is the universe
Between our hearts. Ill? No. I saw him here,—
A tropic threat. 'Twas rage broke his suave guard,
Not illness.
Cha. Hernda!
Her. The Lord Megario
Has asked to compliment a brother guest.
May he be seen? Does his unmannered storm
Spare one amenity?
Cha. Megario knows?
Her. Knows what?
Cha. Oh!—nothing.

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Her. So much more than naught
Your cheek is pale with it.
Cha. No matter, Hernda.
Her. An ashen matter truly, yet not light
As nothing. But your answer. May our guests
Exchange the roof-tree greeting?
Cha. No.
Her. Why not?
That "no" trails consequence. It can not be
Your period.
Cha. They are enemies.
Her. I knew!
Cha. Megario dealt my friend a bitter wrong,—
The foulest wrong that man may put on man.
Her. He's loyal to my father. I know that
Of him,—and of Emilio—nothing.
Cha. Sweet,
I beg one day!
Her. One day? What's hatching here
That's one day short its time?
[*Enter, lower right, Hudibrand, Megario, and Borduc*]
Cha. [*Drawing Hernda aside*] To-morrow, love!
Her. To-night!
Hud. You've won your suit, Megario.
If by our presence in your Goldusan
We can advance that sister country's peace,
The journey's naught. We'll count it done.
Meg. My lord,
All revolution will dispel as air
Before your eye. Our Cordiaz is great,
But his familiar subjects are too near
To take his height, while you they know to be
Of giant measure; and when once they see
Your majesties are brothered, Cordiaz
Will grow your twin in stature.

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Hud. You've our word.
Meg. I treasure it,—and lest repeated thanks
Stale their sincerity, I beg to say
Good-night.
Hud. You have our leave. Good-night, my lord.
[*Megario bows impressively to Hudibrand, slightly to Borduc, and is passing out when Hernda, who has crossed right, intercepts him*]
Her. You leave us early, Lord Megario.
Meg. I do not leave, your Highness. I am driven.
I go to drudgery with my secretaries,
Foregoing even the sleep that might have brought
Your dreamèd face to me.
Her. Is't still your wish
To meet our Spanish guest?
Meg. He grants me that?
Her. He has refused a meeting.
Meg. Ah! . . . Refused.
Her. But there's a way, my lord. When you have passed
The second door without, turn to the left.
You'll find a vaulted passage,—at the end
An entrance to my wood. Come in, and wait.
Meg. You grace me so?
Her. It is not grace that breaks
The covenant of salt. But who keeps faith
With traitors? He is one, by every sign.
An evil thing blown to our royal hearth
Through Chartrien's open love that lets all winds
Pour in. And I'll have proof of it!
Meg. [*Over her hand*] You shall.
[*Exit, lower right*]
Cha. [*Crossing to Hernda*] A long-spun courtesy, and with one merit,—
It ended in good-night.

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Her. [*Gayly*] Unruly yet?
A truce until to-morrow!
Cha. You believe me?
Her. I would not doubt you for a world compact
Of virtues only, but it's no unreason
To fear you are deceived.
Cha. Dear Hernda——
Her. Come!
I love you, Chartrien. Let us have an hour
As light as joy, as sweet as peace, and call
Your friend to share it. He shall smile for me.
I vow it, by his most ungentle frown!
Cha. 'Twill take your deepest magic, for his heart
Holds naught that smiles are made of.
Her. Bring him here.
I'll make that heart my wizard bowl and mix
Such sweet and merry potions in't, his griefs
Must doff their gray for motley. You shall see!
Cha. Art such a witch? [*Exit, upper left*]
Her. What's this I do? My soul
Leans shameward, but I'll trounce it up. The man,
If innocent, keeps so, untouched and clear.
If he aims darkly, creeps a weaponed hate
Upon my noble father, do I worse
Than cancel so the unwrought half of 's crime,
And make him less a villain?
Bor. May I speak
Against this southward jaunt?
Hud. Loud as you please,
My Bordy, but I go.
Bor. Your Highness makes
Assaria bow too low.
Hud. The State shall have
No name in this. I go as Cordiaz' friend,
Not as Assaria's king. I've interests there

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That sort with quiet venture. Give it out
This move in part concerns my health.
Bor. That much
I welcome. You should rest, my lord.
Hud. Ha? Rest?
The twin of death! I'll rest when I am dust.
Nay, then I hope that storm and hurricane
Will keep me whirling. No,—I'll not go lame
Even in report. Say that this move concerns
My pleasure solely,—solely, Borduc.
Her. Father,
I have a suit. May I not go with you?
I long to make that land where you are loved,
More vivid than the dream that now it is.
Hud. And find what lodestar there draws Chartrien
From constancy? Well, you shall go.
Bor. Tut, tut!
Her. Dear father!
Hud. This will give domestic screen
And color to our tack.
Bor. A gadding throne—
Hud. Good Borduc, we will leave the throne at home.
Do not *you* stay?
Bor. I've some authority,
You'll not dispute, my lord. Much as may go
With broad election. My investiture
Lies in the people's choice.
Hud. Ay, you're their bark
Of freedom, where their pride may hoist full sail,
But who wots better, Bordy, that 'tis puffed
With winds that know my port?
Bor. They think their choice
Is free. Sincere in that, they give my post
A dignity not even your majesty
May mock me out of.

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Hud. Fools are noted most
For their sincerity,—a virtue that
Must stand a cipher if uncertified
By wit or wisdom.
Bor. Sir, Assarians
Are not the fools you think them. They are men
Who have the patriot's heart, and on their flag
Where you write "power" their love reads "liberty."
Hud. It does, praise be! And they may keep their flag
To wear around their eyes long as they will.
For then I dance my measure, while they bump
In hither-whither hoodman blind and pay
My fiddler too!
Bor. And what's my part in this?
Hud. The fiddler's, Borduc.
Bor. Sir?
Hud. And your next tune
Is Goldusan. Come, let's rehearse.
Bor. My lord,——
[*Exeunt, lower right, as Chartrien and LeVal enter left*]
Her. You've come, dear Señor! Was it savagery
To wrest the hour from you?
LeV. Too kindly done
For such a name,—though I was deep in bond
To sober thoughts, your Highness.
Her. Be so still.
We would not force our humor on your heart,
But share your own.
LeV. [*Smiling*] Can you be sad?
Her. As rains
That drench October. As the gray
That fringes twilight on the dark of moons.
As seas that sob above a swallowed ship,
Repenting storm. [*Leads to seat, right*]
Come, sir,—and I'll be sad

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In what degree you choose, though I could wish it
Nearer a smile than rheum, and not so heavy
But that its sigh may float upon a song,
A gentle song that might be sorrow's garland
When moan wears down. Wilt hear one now, my lord?
I have a music-maker yon whose lute
Was nectared in a poet's tears the hour
He lost his dream. Say you will hear him! Nay,
That courtier "yes" can not o'ertake the "no"
Sped from your eyes. We'll have no music. Yet
The soul must love it ere one can be sad
To th' very sweet of sadness. O, I know!

LeV. I love it, but not here.

Her. What here forbids?
My bower! The eye translates its tenderness
To fairy sound, nor need of pipe or strings.

LeV. I can not hear the bells of fairydom
When life is making thunder's music 'gainst
This bauble house of play——

Her. [*Rising*] Sir, you forget——

LeV. Nay, I remember!

Her. What do you remember?

LeV. Ah! . . . Pardon, princess!

Cha. May I mend this peace?

Her. [*Sitting again by LeVal*] It is not broken yet.

LeV. Your gentleness
Has saved it, not my manners.

Her. Oh, my lord,
Would I had grace to cover sorrow's breach
As smoothly as a gap in courtesy!
Then you should smile!

LeV. I have a happiness
That makes it thievery in me to take
Your pity. You've a sadder need.

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Her. I'll yield
No jocund vantage to that brow of yours.
You hear this sombre braggart, Chartrien?
Speaks as I were Despair's own fosterling!

LeV. You are. As I am Hope's. Do you not gaze
On earth's foul spots and cry "A sad world this!"
"We must endure!" "The dear God wills it so!"
And such and such like seed of misery
Till hopelessness sprouts chronic?—building then
Your house of life amid its smelling weeds,
Where you may dance—or pray—till you forget
Your creed keeps earth in tears?

Her. And yours, my lord?

LeV. Gives her a singing and forefeeling heart
Whose courage cleaves renunciation's cloud
That swathes her splendor and would sighing keep
Her livid 'mong the stars!

Her. You would divide
Omnipotence with God, and arrogant,
Assume the bigger half. But there are woes
That even your hope, though it go winged and armored,
Must fall before.

LeV. Not one that I'll not face
Until its features mould me destiny,
The shape of radiance it shall wear for man
'Neath an unslandered Heaven! I could not live
If in the life about me I saw not
The world within this world, and sped my hope
The way that it shall take.

Her. Is not that way
Called Peace, Emilio?

LeV. Not the peace that spills
More blood than war, builds bigger jails, and leaves
More waifs to suck the stunting, poisonous breast

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Of Charity! Peace as white ashes spread
Upon injustice' fly-blown wrack——
Her. [*Leaving him*] You are
A revolutionist!
LeV. And black to you,
For revolution leads into the horizon,
And must be figured dark to rearward eyes
Though God beyond gives welcome.
Her. [*Coming gently back*] May we not
Be patient even as Christ, who found this world
The home of poverty and left it so?
Did he not say the poor are ever with us?
LeV. You too must tap that last and golden nail
In th' pauper's coffin!
Her. It is the nail of truth,
If Christ spoke true.
LeV. Words uttered to his day,
Not to all time. Not as a deathless brand
Burning his own millennium. Not meant
To take from man his goal, condemning him
To hug an ulcer to the sick world's end,
Which even your bosom must take to whitest bed
Although your festrous partner be not guessed
Nor visible. But if he did mean that——
That vicious thing—then he is false as hell,
Denying man's bright destiny,—and I,
Who vouch the triumph of an angel race,
Am more a god than he!
Her. You dare blaspheme——
LeV. Because it once was said to men, whom worms
Made dust of twice ten hundred years ago,
"The poor are always with you," such as you
Shall not forever pick your way to ease
O'er broken bodies, lifting up white brows
And hiding crimson feet! Daring to make

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The Christ your sheltering sanction while you feed
On others' lives, and keep injustice sleek
Even as you cosset that dim thing, your soul,
And preen the wings you think bear you aloft
The puddled world!
Her. You lie! You do not know
Our gentle hearts, our——
LeV. Gentle? O, you're nice,
You later cannibals, and will not eat
Of babes at table, but you'll pipe their blood
From unoffending distance, while you pray
Your conscience numb and swear the source is clean.
Some dare to name that fount the Love of God,
And kneel him thanks!
Her. Oh, mad and impious!
Who is this, Chartrien, you've dared call your friend?
[*Megario steps from the grove*]
Meg. He's dumb as prudence, but my tongue is free.
This is Rejan LeVal, the man who hates
Your father,—and my country's enemy.
LeV. [*Plunging toward Megario*] Murderer!
Cha. [*Grasping LeVal*] Come! At once!
Meg. Your pardon, prince.
I must delay you. I feared your sympathy
Would gird itself 'gainst justice, and took care
To balk escape. [*To officer who appears behind him*]
Be off with him. You know
Your road. No stop this side Peonia's border.
Cha. Outlawry this! Stop, sir! You will not dare
Kidnap him on this soil!
Meg. [*Laughs*] Where Hudibrand
Is king?
[*Exit officer with LeVal, lower right*]
Her. This strains your privilege, my lord.
Cha. His privilege? My God! Did you . . .

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Her. I did.
Meg. No third voice here is cordant. I will leave you.
My thousand times most gracious lady, thanks!
Again I bid you happiest good-night! [*Exit*]
Her. I am no adder, though your bitter eyes
Give me that name.
Cha. Not bitter. In my heart,
That wrapped you as the South its dearest bud,
There's nothing left to warm the thought of you
Even with my hate. You are the crown, the peak,
The unmeaning top of all to which I'm most
Indifferent. [*Turns away*]
Her. Look at me!
Cha. I look, and know
My eyes till now were cankered, look and see
The whole fair lie you are.
Her. Nay, Chartrien!
Cha. The book is open. There the brow yet shines
As God o'erlilied it,—an altar urn
Stuffed with profane decay. Those are the eyes
Like springs within a wood where no road leads
With murking pilgrim dust, yet Innocence
There paused looks up no more. That is the hand
That as a comrade angel's took my friend's,—
Reached out as though it parted Heaven's veil
To draw his grief within, then clapped him down
To Hell.
Her. The place for traitors. Let him go.
This moment is for us. 'Tis true your eyes
Were cankered, and I thought by surgeon means
To give them health, but deeper than the eyes
This trouble's seat. Deep as your changèd soul,
That forfeits its divinity to link
With an infection. Here you stood and heard
Those poured-out profanations with no move
Or sound of protest. That was left for me.

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Cha. What truth may pierce such ignorance, fatuous, thick!
That man,—Megario,—with whom you've struck
Alliant palm, twisted a lawless law
To his deformed desire, and took the lands—
The priceless valley lands of Cana Ru—
From gentle dwellers there, whose titles bore
The rooted claim of dear ancestral graves
Nine generations deep,—and when they stood
The guardians of their doors, faced them with guns,
Dragged them to his bribed courts, weighed them with fines,
And sent them to his burning maguey fields
To slave and rot.
Her. No—don't——
Cha. The lands were sold
To Hudibrand——
Her. It can not be!
Cha. Not be?
That cry is stale as ignorance, as old
As wrong. I've heard it till my ears refuse
To register its emptiness. LeVal,
It was, rose first against Megario,—
Stood up and urged men to be Man,—and this,
That makes archangels in the ranks of Heaven,
Was treason upon earth. He lived—escaped—
But not his wife. Anointed woman, such
As centuries with conjoinèd virtues breed
Once and no more! She was condemned, enslaved,
And toiling in the steaming fields, fell down,
Was flogged, and died.
Her. No! no! no! no!
Cha. So she
Is free. But now LeVal goes back. My friend!
O, giant heart! I see you stagger, drop,
As feverous as the smitten earth——

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Her. Who could
Believe such things? You're wrong! You must—you shall
Be wrong! He was a traitor, bitter-souled,
Undoing my father's work!
Cha. Farewell!
Her. Oh, Chartrien,
I did it for the best!
Cha. The woman's cry.
She'd wreck a world, and from that earthquake piled
Look up to say she did it for the best.
Her. You will not go? You loved me one hour past.
I am not changed. I'm Hernda still.
Cha. The same.
And yet I loved you. But no blush need burn
The soul escaped enchantment. 'Twas a charm
Enringed me with its bale till helpless there,
And feeble as a babe in bassinet,
I cooed away my manhood,—emptied time
With infant fingering toward your protean hair!
Her. You *loved* me!
Cha. More than ever could be laid
To madness' charge, or god that passion whelms
With mortal longing till his skies become
His prison, and dark earth Elysian ground
Beneath the feet he loves!
Her. [*With arms beseeching*] Here, Chartrien, here!
Cha. Even when my eyes—so late—were wide to wrong
That binds the race to pain's dread Caucasus,
My mad imagination laid the gift
Of seership on you, dreamed that you would go
To meet the gleam of the delivering days,——
Her. With you!
Cha. Sail any sea of venture, beat
Through any storm to make the prophet's port,—

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White priestess vassal to the truth that leads
The planet into light!
Her. Together, Chartrien!
Cha. That was my dream. Then coming to your side,
There was no life but yours,—no world that bled
And felt the vulture feeding. Groans of men
Grew still, or like the unavailing hum
Of far-off, aimless bees, scarce reached my ears
That heard, more near, as music from new earth,
Your children call me father. Ay, 'twas but
The storming undersea of passioning sex
That breaking to the sky o'erlaid my stars
And wore the mask of Heaven! That ebbless power,
That spawning tide of Nature, by whose might
She took primordial forts and made Life hers!
Still does it tear belated, unassuaged,
In wreck about the Mind's aspiring fanes,
And shakes the nesting Spirit from her towers,
Her heavenly brood unfledged!
Her. Oh! Oh!
Cha. Here—now—
I beat it back, and go my way unmated
Till beauty fair as yours has bred a soul
And signals me! [*Exit*]
Her. Stay, Chartrien! Oh, my love!

[*Falls. Curtain*]

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ACT II

SCENE: *A grove in the outskirts of a town in Goldusan. Semi-tropical verdure. Rocks, shrubbery, trees, at convenience. A hidden cascade mumbles upper right, not loud enough to disturb conversation. At upper left, the pillared and vine-wreathed entrance to a mansion. A wall, rear, partly hidden by foliage. Paths lead off, right and left, lower, under trees. It is evening, and the grove is lit for revel. Gay flocks of people pass, then Hernda and Megario enter lower right.*

Meg. Unsoft as winter! Thou hast brought thy north,
With thee, a frigid shade, here where the hours
Are poppy-fingered, and their dreaming breasts
Unshuttered as the summer!
Her. Is it true,
This joy, that smiles as though its fountained heart
Could not be emptied?
Meg. True as that I love you.
Her. But if it is no mask, why should revolt
O'ercloud your borders?
Meg. There's no just revolt.
Her. But Chartrien said——
Meg. Are you yet poison-tinct
With that old rebel tale his credulous heart
Dressed new in his white honor till both grew
One sooty treason?
Her. Where is Chartrien now?
Meg. Wherever he may hatch a discontent
And cluck us trouble. But of late he spurs

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His heart of venture, and dartles to our towns
To stir the scum there.

Her. Scum? You've such a thing
In Cordiaz' happy land? I'll see that scum.
It breathes, does 't not? Has eyes, and tongue?
Can answer if one speaks?

Meg. You're merry, princess.

Her. As graves at night. All is not open here.
I shall go farther,—knock at doors where Truth
Keeps honest house, not gowned for holiday.

Meg. One want we have,—that you will stay with us
And be the fairy soul of Goldusan.
Then must our land, so measureless endeared,
Be cherished as the darling care of Heaven,
Where storm may breathe but as a twittering bird
That fears to shake its nest.

Her. You've only words!
Words like these thousand-thousand smiles that seem
Half real and half painted,—teasing, strange,—
All feeding one illusion round my way
Till even the ground unqualifies beneath me
And makes each step a question.

Meg. 'Tis the doubt
You look through that transforms our face
Of truth and paints us vaguely hued.
O, for our many smiles, wilt not give one?

Her. Nay, there's a darkness fringing on this grove.
It creeps above the walls, it touches me,
And makes me shudder winding at my feet!

Meg. You've sipped of fancy at a witch's knee!
[*Plucks a flower*]
But see,—your serpent shadows nurture this.
Confess to its perfection, and be shriven
Of any thought less fair.

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Her. Oh, if I might!
No, keep it. Let us find our friends.
Meg. [*Drops the flower*] My hand
Defiles it for you.
Her. Nay——
Meg. Where is the fan
I carried yester-night?
Her. 'Tis—lost.
Meg. 'Tis burnt!
Her. What wind's your gossip?
Meg. Truth paused at my ear.
But, princess, if there's any charm will draw
Your eyes to me unburdened of their hate,
I'll find it though it lie beneath the ruin
Of every other hope!
Her. I'll leave you, sir.
Meg. Forgive me! Love will speak,—ay, storm its need,
Though each vain word pile up the barricade
That fends the heart desired.
Her. My lord, no hate
Is in that barrier. I'm free of that.
Meg. Thanks for that little much. Your highness speaks
Of journeying. What can I say to gild
My own Peonia till it distant gleams
The gem of pilgrimage? There you will see
How earth is dressed when the devoted sun
Is pledged to her adorning. Trees that mass
Their bloom in forest heavens, giving her
A nearer sky. Unthwarted vines that scarf
Her mountain shoulders with their pendent clouds.
Lakes where a dreamer's bark may drift unoared
And chance no port save beauty. Everywhere
The dart and wave of color that would beckon

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A neighbor planet looking once this way.
Come, be my guest. One day! I'll ask no more.
Her. I do not know. Señora Ziralay
Will be my guide. I go with her.
Meg. With her?
Her. What is't? I touch the shadow. You are not
Her friend?
Meg. She hates in secret, while her smile
Levies the world for love.
Her. I'll hate where she does,
And know my soul is safe.
Meg. Her husband holds
By love and purse to Cordiaz, but she
Is a LeVal.
Her. LeVal? And kin to—*him?*
Meg. Rejan? His sister. And I know her nature
Is tinted as her blood, whatever hue
It wears at court.
Her. A sister to the man
That I gave up to death. And I have dared
To love her—take her kiss——
Meg. [*Cautioning*] She's here.
[*Enter, lower right, Señora Ziralay and Guildamour*]
Her. Señora!
We spoke of you.
Señ. And with such gloom?
Meg. No, no!
Señ. It lingers yet, my lord. Do I in absence cast
Such knitted shadows?
Meg. Safely asked of us,
Who know your bright philosophy. How fares
That magic broom with which you'd sweep the earth
Of every ill? Is't still invincible?
Señ. Much worn of late, my lord, as you should know,
Who give it work.

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Meg. You'd leave us not one grief
To keep us praying and rebuilding Heaven?
Abolish Death perhaps?
Señ. True mock! I would
Except the death that's like a waiting bed
When not another turn may mend the day;
When sleep is sweeter than the thumbèd book,
And hearth-near voices drowse like waves that lap
Shores unconcerned. Now we are murdered, all.
Meg. No, no, Señora!
Gui. Ay! Do we not vaunt,
And set it rarely down, a thing to note,
If age unmoor the life-disusèd raft,
For th' chartless cruise?
Señ. Now we go hurried out,
With half our dreams unpacked, and earth made poor
With a few grains of dust where should have risen
Our wisest years in flower.
Meg. Fate, fate, Señora!
Señ. What's fate but ignorance? And not always that
Comes hobbling with excuse. Sometimes a man,
Whose eyes fling lances at the foes of Life,
Is knouted from the world——
Meg. No more, I pray!
This is a festal night. Reserve your sermon
For our next fast.

[*A musical group plays softly under trees left. Enter lower right, Hudibrand, Cordiaz, Rubirez, Vardas, Ziralay, and others*]

Hud. Here, daughter? You've been sought.
Cor. The search was mine, your highness. I would beg
A grace of you.
Her. You grant one as you beg,
Your majesty. I'll not do less than give
Your own again. But pray you name it, sir.

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Cor. This garden where our amity has borne
Its fairest blossom shall be called henceforth
The Grove of Peace, and we would beg your highness
To queen our christening.
Her. A queenly part,
And royally I thank you, but I'll play it
With humblest prayer that Heaven may keep unbroken
These new-sworn bonds between my land and yours.
Cor. So pray we all.
Her. Is this our scene?
Cor. Not here.
Come you this way, my friends. We'll cast the wine
To yon cascade, and let the waters bear it
Down to my capital.

[*All go off upper right, except two officers, who remain centre, and a guard who walks to and fro by wall rear, sometimes visible, sometimes hidden by the wood and rocks*]

First Off. This peace will prove
As stout as any spider's thread that swings
In a blowing rain. Fah!
Second Off. Climb what hill you please,
You see the rebels' smoke.
First Off. But where in name
Of magic does Bolderez get his gold?
The rebels we pick up have lost no meals.
Second Off. Enough he gets it. Goldusan sleeps well.
Bolderez is so near that if his men
Were eagles they could pick out Cordiaz' eyes
And he'd not wake to miss 'em.
First Off. Cordiaz
Is not asleep, but so bedimmed and fooled
By a thievish Cabinet that what he sees
Takes any name they give it.
Second Off. He is old.

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First Off. Ah, there you hit it. Warriors should die young.
When age unsoldiers them their field-worn hearts
Have no defence against a crafty peace,
And falling power will seize on any prop
Be't foul or fair, to keep on legs.
Second Off. My faith!
His crutches are so villanous, a fall
Were better than his gait.
[*Enter Ziralay, lower right*]
First Off. Well, Ziralay,
What news?
Zir. Where's Cordiaz?
Second Off. He comes.
[*Re-enter group from the cascade*]
Zir. [*To Cordiaz*] My lord,
The Assarian prince is captured, and is held
Within the town.
Cor. What? Chartrien?
Zir. Yes, my lord.
Cor. Fit period to this dedicated day!
Our gentle bonds are now forged whole. The man
Who was Bolderez' hope, most luminous
Of all who drew rebellion to him, now
Is darkly fallen.
Rub. This golden aid cut off,
Bolderez stands so bare his nakedness
Will sprint to nearest cover.
Cor. I'll see his face.
Bring here the prisoner.
Off. I'll speed the order,
Your majesty. [*Exit*]
Rub. Shall he be shot, my lord?
Cor. Shot? No. But kept close prisoned.

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Rub. That is mercy
You have denied the blood of Goldusan.
Why grant it to Assaria?
Var. In him swells
A strength was never in LeVal. I urge
His instant death.
Cor. No, friends. He is a son
Of our great neighbor, and his death would wound
The courtesy of nations that is kept
By lenience unabraded.
Var. Breath so bold
Will from a prison fan the treachery
Whose flame would die without it.
Her. Father, speak!
Cor. We'll hear our friend, Assaria's majesty,
If he have word for us.
Hud. I pray your highness
To let no ghostly and unfounded fear
Of my Assaria——
Cor. Fear, my lord?
Hud. I mean
No more than ask you to be just, nor let
My presence here enforce your chivalry
To do your country wrong. Think of your people,
Not the approval of a gazing land
Whose distant nod is given in ignorance
Of your stern cause.
Her. Here's not my father! So
The clock runs backward, and time ends.
Meg. [*To Cordiaz*] Your highness,
My voice is not so loud as others here,
But could I send it far as sound may go,
It should take mercy's part in this debate.
Var. You need no trump, my lord. A limpet's whistle
Would tell us where you stand.

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Meg. I stand with Cordiaz,
His majesty of Goldusan!
Cor. This matter
Is not for open market. Come, my friends,
Let us go in. Please you to walk before.
[*Rubirez, Ziralay, Vardas, and Megario enter the house, upper left. Their majesties linger at entrance. Guildamour retreats on path, upper right. Officers go off, lower left. Hernda and Señora Ziralay wait unnoticed, right*]
Cor. Is't kindly done, my lord, to pose your station
In public against mine?
Hud. My neutral words
You've packed with import all your own. I strive
To bend not right or left, but keep my way
As even as Justice.
Her. [*To Señora*] Justice! There's a stone
That was my father.
Cor. Yet, my lord, this prince
Is of your house.
Hud. Is it for Cordiaz
To teach me mercy?
Cor. By my soul!
Hud. I know
Whence starts this softness. Mercy has no fane
Where you leave offering.
Cor. I know you too!
By holy Heaven, your head was never bared
In Justice' temple! You now seek my fall,
Because I've turned at last to check the hand
That rifles Goldusan. Is't not enough
That I've unjewelled all her treasured hills
To alien avarice—that her forests bleed
The priceless sap of all primeval Springs
Into your golden stream? But I must lay

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My people under bond,—sell them as slaves
To buy your stolen railways!
Hud. Stolen, sir?
I've paid——
Cor. I know what you have paid! You've sent
Your henchmen creeping in the night, to buy
At beggar's price our toil-built roads, and where
You could not buy, you bribed and thieved, till all
Was yours!
Hud. What of *my* toil, that built the lines
Through half your provinces?
Cor. You paid yourself!
Took from my governors, half gulls, half thieves
Of your own breed, a hundred times the worth
Of every graded foot, in lands and mines
And water-power that holds the prisoned light
Of robbed futurity! Now we must buy
Once more those tracks, long over-bought,—pay you
A value centuple for every mile,—
Pay you in bonds—bonds in hell's verity—
Whose interest will outrun each reckoned year
The summed returns from our fool's purchase! No!
That is my word while I am Goldusan!
Hud. You wake too late. I'll tell you so, my lord,
Since this imprudent burst thrusts courtesy
From court. Your ministers have given assent——
Cor. Have *given!* You'll over-steal enough
To quit their boldest price!
Hud. I'll not defend
Your chosen servants, sir.
Cor. *My* servants! Oh,
What State is free from scuttling greed that bores
For treasure through the stanchest hold?
Hud. This moral chant comes late from you, my lord,
Who've fingered heavily in many a pie
Spiced in the devil's kitchen.

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Cor. But to sell
My people! Pay you this devouring price
For stock that barely yields the groaning third
Of interest on your bonds! What shall we do
To pay it? Rob our treasury, and ask
Our worn-out slaves to fill it up again?
Not ask, but goad and lash,—for you must have
Your own—you honest mortgagees of babes
Unborn——

Hud. Is all the scarlet on our hands?
What of that mountain province, sold entire
To foreign pockets, and the dwellers there
Torn up like shrieking roots and cast abroad
To fasten where they could?

Cor. And where was that
But in your hell-mouthed mines? You wanted slaves,
And got them.

Her. I shall die, Señora!

Señ. Listen!

Hud. The tyrant Cordiaz grown pitiful?
Then stones are butter, alabaster is
Uncrumpled down. You should have wept before
The Pueblo strike, then fewer corpses had
Gone out to sea.

Cor. Don't name that thing to me!
Don't speak of it! I will not bear that curse!

Hud. Mine aged convert, lies it in your will,
Or juster Heaven's?

Cor. 'Twas your property
My troops defended—and Rubirez lied.
Swore that the men foamed mad as tuskèd beasts,
And must be trashed to place,—men who had asked
No more than bread when you shut up your doors——

Hud. Not I, my friend.

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Cor. Your tool then. One of all
Your million hookèd hands fast in the heart
Of my poor country, shut your doors, thereby
To starve the wretches till they crawled to you
And begged their chains again. But they—their veins
Were not all tapped—they'd blood left, and arose
From their dumb prayers to *fight* for life—and then. . . .

Hud. You sent the troops.

Cor. Because Rubirez lied!

Hud. Because you knew there'd be no after-sale
For your high favors, once let titles drift
Unguaranteed. And when your work was done—
Your work, my tear-washed saint, why weary patience
Could not take further time to count the dead,
Or dig so many graves. They were piled up
And carted to the sea——

Cor. Oh, every tide
Brings back their faces—staring, staring up!
Will God not answer them? I dare not shut
My eyes. . . .

Hud. And this is why you weep so late?
Come, Cordiaz, you're broken. Leave a throne
Your own fears shake. You know that I must win.
Own you are mastered——

Cor. Mastered! While I've breath
I am a king. If I win peace of God,
And his white angel let my dark soul out,
'Twill be for this—the last throe of my strength
Was spent against you!

Hud. Madly you've uncased
Your madness, and I know my weapons.

Cor. So!
I too, my lord, know how to sleep and wake
With hand on steel.

Hud. Then is there more to say?

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Cor. All's said. We're waited for. Assaria,
Will't please you enter?
Hud. I thank you, Goldusan.
[*They go in*]
Her. Don't comfort me, Señora. Not a breath.
I'll not disfigure shame with comfort's patch,
But droop as low as leprous dust, and take
Some pride in that. 'Tis dark here, dark. Pray God
I am asleep!
Señ. Dear princess!
Her. Men do well
To keep the women blind. If once they knew,
They'd breed no more, but let a bairnless world
Escheat to God. Yet you, Señora, knew,
And you have children. By your motherhood
You've bound you Life's accomplice,—given it heart
And veins and an accepting soul!
Señ. I have!
Deny our hearts these babes, and we deny
The future that we fight for. Ah, defeat
May be endured by those who hold in lap
The victors of to-morrow!
Her. Oh, my father!
Señ. This truth was edged and swift. You should have had
Love's lips to teach you——
Her. I've been taught, my friend,
But would not learn. [*Rising*] Señora, it was I
Betrayed your brother!
Señ. Yes. . . . I know.
Her. To death!
You do not understand. I killed him!
Señ. No.
There, love,—forget a little. I've a hope
He is not dead.

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Her. Not dead? What gives you hope?
Señ. Perhaps the nameless mentor in the heart
That tells us when our lovèd shrines are lit
And when they're out forever. But there's more.
Whenever Lord Megario's eye meets mine
There's something couched there speaks me living wrong,
Not wrong that's ended—locked within a grave
No prayer may open. He is burning yet
With uncompleted vengeance—and its shame.
Her. Señora, you've a plan!
Señ. 'Twill take much gold.
Her. Ah, I have that.
Señ. And courage.
Her. Well!
Señ. Such as,
We're told, no woman has.
Her. Here is my life,
And any Fate may have it that will make
Your brother live. Will you forgive me then?
Señ. [*Kissing her*] Ah, dear, you could not know. . . .
Her. How did you hear?
Señ. From Chartrien.
Her. You are friends?
Señ. So true he seems
Not friend but friendship to my soul. And I
Talk here, while yonder he——
Her. They dare not! No!
My father would. . . . My father? Oh, Señora!
[*Sobs hopelessly*]
Señ. We'll find a door to this.
Her. Would Ziralay
Not help?
Señ. Had he the wit, he would not dare.
While I'm his wife he must keep double guard
Against suspicion.

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Her. Oh!
Señ. If there's one true,
'Tis Guildamour. I'll go to him.
Her. At once!
He took that path.
Señ. I know what shade he seeks
When he would brood.
[*Exit Señora, upper right. Hernda waits drooping, as if too weary for thought. A group of ladies and gentlemen enter, lower right, among them Guildamour*]
Her. [*Starting up*] Oh!—Guildamour!
Gui. Your highness!
[*Leaves his party chattering lower left, and crosses to Hernda*]
Her. Señora seeks you.
Gui. Ah, about the prince?
Her. We have a hope, my lord, your hand may turn
Some stone of rescue.
Gui. Mine are powerless hands,
Pinned to inaction's cross. My eyes may turn
No way that is not watched. To lift my lids
May raise a cry of "Treason!"
Her. There's no help?
In all this land no help?
Gui. Megario,
Could he be softened to it, is the man
Who might with safety slip a secret bolt
For Chartrien.
Her. He!
Gui. His name is set above
The nick of treason by his stern dispatch
Of poor LeVal,—and, that struck off, he yet
Is chronicled so dark that none would lay
A fair deed at his door.
Her. Megario!

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Gui. I would not name him, but I know he loves you,
And there's no soul that love may not endue
With tinge of Heaven.

[*Re-enter Señora*]

Her. Señora!
Señ. [*Panting*] I have seen him!
Gui. The prince?
Her. Not Chartrien?
Señ. Yes!
Gui. Escaped?
Señ. The guards
Were of our heart—they let him make the wood—
I've hidden him——
Her. Oh, where?
Señ. Within the cave
Veiled by the waterfall. But safety there
Is minute-frail.
Gui. What way? He'll climb the wall?
Señ. And drop into the river.
Gui. Yes. What guard
Walks there? I see. 'Tis Miguel. And I know
Somewhat of him,—more than he'd tell the winds.
Señ. Thank Heaven for a sinner! When he's next
Behind the rocks, then to him, Guildamour,
And be his palsying conscience. Peg his feet
To the earth!
Gui. Trust me, Señora!
Señ. I'll lead off
Those babblers. Princess, you're the watch,—you'll give
The signal.
Her. Ah! What is 't?
Señ. Two pebbles dashed
Into the water is our sign.
Her. The guard!
He's gone!

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Gui. It is our time. [*Exit into wood, rear*]

Her. [*As the talkative group move up*] Take them away, Señora! It would kill me now to meet
A painted smile.

Señ. I'll go. And you—be swift.
Don't stop—don't think. [*Joins group*]
I know where lordings three
Wait for as many maids.

A young lady. You saw them pass?

Señ. Disconsolate.

Young Lady. O, to the river!

Another. Come!

[*They go off with Señora, lower left*]

Her. Now! [*Takes up two stones. Ziralay and Megario come out of house*] Oh! [*She drops the stones. They cross to her*]

Meg. You wait?

Her. I read the sentence.

Zir. Death.

Her. And when?

Zir. To-night. They've given Vardas charge
Of 't. He's an eager butcher,—does not know
Delay.

Her. You wished his death.

Zir. I voted no.
Megario laid my doubts.

Her. Did he do that?

Zir. He countered to their teeth.

Her. [*To Megario*] So merciful
Is hate?

Meg. The prince's death would mean the fall
Of Cordiaz, and our houses rock with his.

Her. Be clearer, pray you.

Meg. Vardas wants the throne,
And we've a sour and guilty faction here

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Who'd see him on it, but they dare not move
Against a king yet rich in arms and friends.
And Hudibrand is not so absolute
That he may turn the army of Assaria
On the sole pivot of his word. For that,
Even he must knock the sleeping nation up
And ask good leave.
Her. You'd say, sir, Hudibrand
Would favor Vardas?
Zir. Short and plain, he does.
Her. What then?
Meg. The Assarians are proud, and where
They think their honor's pricked, their pride out-tops
Their judgment. Chartrien's death, whose ugly weight
Must lie with Cordiaz, will inflame their hearts
Till Hudibrand may send an army on us,
His people clapping to 't. In open day
They'll choose the road his cunning cut by night,
And pray him take it.
Zir. Ay, and where are we,
With Vardas crowned in Goldusan?
Her. I see.
Meg. He'd like my million acres in Peonia
Sliced for his foreign hounds!
[*Enter an officer*]
Zir. What trouble now?
Off. Prince Chartrien has escaped.
Meg. And you in charge?
Off. I sent him with good men, or so I thought,
Being pressed to another way——
Meg. His guards,—what name?
Off. Vinaldo, and a sergeant, who——
Meg. Vinaldo!
He's on the blue list, turning fast to black.
Did you not know it?

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Off. I held him, sir, the pick
Of loyalty.
Meg. Well,—on. What else?
Off. They reached
The grove, passed in, and after prudent time,
The guards came out, smug as all right, and now
They're gone,—clear foot,—will doff you from the hills.
Meg. A tale for Vardas! You may save your beard,
But not your neck.
Off. I'll not shake yet. The prince
Is in the grove. We'll soon uncover him.
Zir. The walls are picketed?
Off. A double watch
Is on.
Zir. That's well enough.
Off. On chance he makes
The wall, I've reinforced the river guard.
Meg. Both sides?
Off. A close patrol, both east and west.
Though he had fishes' gills and dived the stream,
He'd not get by. That way is fast against him
As Belam's iron door.
Meg. [*To Hernda*] You're ill?
Her. No, no!
I'm well—quite well.
Meg. The lily in your cheek
Lies not so bravely.
Off. [*To Ziralay*] If he gets out of this,
He'll steer around the moon. We'll find him, sir.
But he's most darkly hid. Has made a coat
Of leaves and plays the grouse trick on us.
Zir. Come!
His majesty must know. [*Ziralay and officer go into house*]
Meg. How may I help you? Let the service be
Of such poor nature as your dog might give,
And pride will whistle to it.

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Her. O, my lord,
I half believe you. When our angels fall,
Then devils are not black. And I have lost
My father.
Meg. Devils! You've a tongue.
Her. Forgive
A heart unmantled, and too wild to choose
What word may veil it. I would say, my lord,
In this discolored world I now begin
To find you fair,——
Meg. O, heavenly retraction!
Her. And if I ask a service it will be
No paltry one, but such as makes the king
Bow to the knight.
Meg. I'll prove this grace
Is native in me, and not solely lent
Of your new bounty!
Her. Would you save the life
Of Chartrien?
Meg. I would. Though a treasonous tool
Of rebelry, he should be held by me
A prisoner of knightliest war.
Her. A prisoner!
Meg. You can not ask his freedom! That would give
My foes clear argument to pluck me bare,
And set me outlawed on the rebel side
Of this deplored division.
Her. Oh, not free!
And in your power!
Meg. To hold him prisoner,—that
I'd undertake, and make the action good
Even to this bloody council.
Her. You'd dare that?
Meg. My policy is open, and I'd dare
To put it into deed that must commend me
To their unwilling justice. To do more

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Would disarray all sense,—be fullest like
The idiot's gesture that disrobes the wretch
Of his last sanity.
Her. Megario. . . .
Meg. What secret is so dear these costly sighs,
Like gentle pickets ever reinforced,
Let it not pass?
Her. A secret? No!
Meg. But yes.
I push me by its fragile guardians,
And hear it beating in its citadel.
Her. What says it then?
Meg. You've seen the prince.
Her. My lord!
Meg. You know what shadow hides him.
Her. No, no, no!
My oath, sir, I've not seen him!
Meg. I would trust
One negative, not three. Give him to me,
And you will know he lives. Let him be found
By Vardas' men, and when you wake to-morrow
The earth will be without him.
Her. No, not you!
I'll go to Cordiaz. He'll save the prince
As he would save his throne. You've taught me that.
Meg. He'd lose it so. Should Cordiaz to-night
Set Chartrien free, he'd rise without a lord
To bid him one good-morrow.
Her. Ziralay. . . .
Meg. Ask him? An ass whose ears if visible
Would signal Mars! Say he had courage for you,
He'd blunder with the prince to Vardas' arms.
Her. Ah, *you* could do it,—set him free!
Meg. Nay—don't—
Don't ask it, if you've mercy! Your highness knows

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I could not grant so much though lips I love
Above my soul should beg that treason of me.
Though they should take again those dearest words
That knighted me, and now lie in my heart
Like swelling seed of fortune! Let me shield
His life. In saintliest trust—— [*She shudders from him*]
You fear me so?
Her. I do! I do! You took away LeVal,
And he no longer lives.
Meg. He does! My oath,
He does!
Her. You spared him?
Meg. By my soul, he lives!
But let the word sleep in your vestal ear,
Until these smouldering troubles die to dust
And feed the grass above them. For the State
Believes LeVal is dead, nor taints me with
Such treacherous clemency. See how I lay
My safety and my honor in your hands?
I give them, hostages for Chartrien!
Ah, you should know how I will guard your trust,
For when I say to you he does not live,
Your eyes will slay the single, nurturing hope
Of my own life!
Her. [*Battling*] I can not! I'm not Fate
To do her awesome work.
Meg. We aid her most
With passive hand, as Chartrien's ghost will come
On mourning nights to tell you.
Her. Oh, I'll speak! . . .
No, no! Ah, never, never!
Meg. [*Resolute, giving up his suit*] I must join
The hunt. There's but one place—the cave——
Her. The cave!
Meg. Those guards are fools—or shy of water.

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Her. Sir,
What cave?
Meg. He's there. Your cold, uncandid calm
Has babbled it. The frost is crafty that
Puts out such anxious fire.
Her. My lord, if I
Should tell you. . . .
Meg. Quickly then! How canst debate
So fatally, knowing delay but robs him
Of venture's favor? Every moment steals
A bud of chance.
Her. How will you take him out?
Meg. I'll pass the gates unchallenged. Close without,
My car stands by,—a racer never spent,
And begs no pause. Know he is safe, and sleep.
Night will be secret, and we'll greet the sun
In my Peonia——
Her. Ah, Peonia's far!
Meg. And Vardas near.
Her. Take these two stones, my lord.
Cast them into the falls——
Meg. So! I was right!
But you must summon him.
Her. So soon a tyrant?
Meg. I'll take him from your hands,—no other way.
Your trust to me! And with my life I'll guard it!
For that you love him is my means to you.
Once in your heart, I'll win the thronèd place
Though all his saints defend it!
Her. True, my friend,
We shall be nearer, for anxiety
Will draw me to you with a longing like
The aching letch for morning in the eyes
Pain keeps astare. You then will be the goal
Of fondest question,—and from that—who knows?

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Out of unbroken faith, and kindly shafts
'Tween hearts disponent, bridges have been built
For love's plenipotence to cross.
Meg. You bid
Me hope?
Her. I do not say despair. Sometimes
A presto-worker sits within the soul
Of gratitude, and love that must give thanks
In name of one beloved, has then been known
To pass from the liege object to the heart
Whose compass held them both in selfless bounds
Of chivalry. And yet—I promise nothing!
Meg. I ask no promise but the one I find
In words that so deny it. Now the thought
Is born, I'll make the naked infant grow
Heir of my princely opportunity.
Go now. An instant may defeat us. Haste!
My purse must buy a guard.
[*Hernda goes off, upper right. Megario walks left and calls*]
Benito! Ho!
You and your fellow!
[*Enter two guards*]
I have work for you.
You've seen my gold before. Here's more of it.
Stand for my word.
[*Hernda returns with Chartrien*]
Cha. Gods give me time for one
Wild kiss! O, Heaven! To find and lose you in
One whirling breath!
Meg. [*His pistol at aim*] You are my prisoner.
[*Señora rushes on left*]
Señ. Oh, princess! Oh!
Meg. [*To guards*] Move on with him.
Her. Wait—wait——

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Meg. No time.
Her. But I must tell——
Cha. Let fiends be dumb.
You damned and double traitress, this my hand
Could lay you dead!
Meg. [*To Hernda, who seems dazed*] My goddess, I'll be true!
[*Kisses her, and goes off, lower right, with Chartrien and guards*]
Señ. You let him kiss you!
Her. Who?
Señ. Megario.
Her. I did not know it. I am dead, I think.

[*Curtain*]

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ACT III

SCENE: *A yard, walled and spiked, of Megario's hacienda. A long, low hut, the men's sleeping-quarters, at right. In upper centre, a smaller hut which serves for kitchen and also as sleeping-room for several women. On left, the yard continues, showing other huts used by families. The entrance gate is off stage, left. An unused gate, locked and barred in wall, right.*

Hernda, in the guise of a young Maya woman known as Famette, stirs a pan of food which is heating on some coals in front of kitchen. Lissa stands in door of hut watching her.

Lis. [*Stepping out*] You mend, Famette. But when
you came—all thumbs.
A woman grown and couldn't spoon up fish!

Fam. It was the smell. How can they eat it, Lissa?

Lis. You'll eat it too.

Fam. That? Never!

Lis. Another week
Will starve you to it.

[*Ysobel comes out of kitchen bearing apron full of cups and spoons which she places on ground*]

Yso. [*Looking left*] Here's Masio in. [*Enters hut*]

Lis. He's always first.
[*Masio comes up left*] How did my boy get on?

Mas. I wasn't near him in the field.

Lis. He did
His stint?

Mas. I never heard.

Lis. No eyes, no ears,—
All belly, you!

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Mas. [*Taking up spoon and cup from the pile*] Fish!
fish!
Lis. Beans first. You know
The rules.
Mas. I've teeth can break 'em. Fish, Famette!
[*Famette puts fish into his cup*]
There'll be a blessed cleaning-up to-night.
Lis. More beating? Has the master come?
Mas. [*Nods*] And on
The rounds. He'll clear the yards. News from the north
Has turned him red and black.
Fam. A flogging? Oh,
If you were men you'd fight with your bare hands
Till you were free!
Mas. Free as the dead. Our blood
Would soak the earth and make more hennequin,—
That's all.
Fam. Then run away.
Mas. How far? The swamps?
To sleep with snakes—a week or less?
Fam. Across
The ridges.
Mas. Where the sun would lap you dry
As crackling cat-guts? Thirst would draw you in
To th' next hacienda well. The masters own
The water, and in this land, that's life.
Fam. No chance?
They never get away?
Mas. Sometimes a man
Makes Quito, but he soon comes back.
Fam. Comes back?
Mas. What else? In Quito there's no work. He starves.
And here—there's beans. So he gives up, and then
They send him back.

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Fam. And he is flogged?
Mas. Ay, till
His bones crack.
Fam. Oh! He bears it?
Mas. Like a man,
My dear.
Fam. The coward!
Mas. So—back to the field,
Mute as a snail, and poorer too, for then
The dream is gone of any life but this.
Fam. They have no spirit—none!
Mas. Much as you'll have
This time next year.
Fam. Next year? I shall be gone.
My debt was just ten pesos.
Mas. [*Incredulous*] You were sold
For that?
Fam. I'll work it out.
Mas. Be 't ten or hundreds,
Who comes here stays. You'll soon know that, my bird,
And limber your fine neck.

[*As they talk, men and women enter in groups of scores and dozens until there are several hundred in the yard. They are mostly of mixed blood, their color ranging from the full brown of the Maya to the pale olive of the Peonian aristocrat. At a spout, upper left, they wash their hands, then drop about wearily. One man sits near Famette, his head sunk on his chest. She lays her hand on his shoulder*]

Fam. What, Garza, you?
Who were so blithe this morning, on your way
To freedom?
Garza. [*Rocking*] Mother of God! Oh, Mother of God!
Fam. What is it, Garza?

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Mas. There you have it! You see
Who comes here stays.
Fam. But he was free! His friend
Brought twenty pesos to pay off his debt.
Gonzalo. And when he went to pay it, on the books
There stood two hundred pesos against Garza.
Mas. Two hundred—twenty,—you see, Famette,
How much a little "o" can do.
Fam. They dare
Do that? I'll see the magistrate! [*The men stare at her*]
Mas. [*Patting her shoulder*] Poor girl!
Fam. I will! Why not? What is he for?
Gon. What for?
To see we are well beaten when we ask
For justice. He must serve who pays him,—that's
The master.
Fam. Oh, you worse than slaves!
Mas. No names,
My proudling. Wait a year, then what you please.
[*The men have been eating. Ysobel stands in door of hut holding a great bowl of beans from which the peons fill their cups. Lissa gives out the fish. Her boy, Iduso, crouches by her skirts*]
Lis. [*To boy*] Not eat? Now you're a man? Twelve years to-day!
Fam. [*Bending over Iduso*] Is't fever, Lissa?
Lis. [*With sullen jealousy*] Let him be, Famette.
What do you know? You've got no children.
Fam. I've
A little brother.
Lis. Brother! Nothing that.
Fam. He's just Iduso's age.
Lis. [*Softened*] And has to take
A man's work on him?
Fam. N-o——

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Lis. I said it now.
What do you know? Look at your hands—not stumps
Like mine.
Mas. Who hugs the post to-night?
Gon. I heard
Of seven warned.
Yso. My man! He hasn't come!
Mas. God's mercy, give us peace! It was his turn
To put away the knives.
[*Ysobel leans against hut. Famette takes bowl from her*]
Lis. There's seven, you say?
Ben. None from this yard. Famette, you haven't seen
A flogging yet?
Fam. And never will, you beast!
Ben. Your never's short,—less than an hour.
Fam. What do you mean?
Ben. The whip draws blood to-night,
And we must all look on, for our soul's good.
It is the master's order.
Fam. I'll not go!
Mas. Why, God looks on, Famette, and so may we.
All Heaven sees it, and I'll pledge my—fish—
That not an angel blanches.
Gon. You should see
The master!
Fam. He is there? Does *he* look on?
Mas. O, not quite that. To eye the work
Would show too grossly, but you'll see him there,—
Somewhat aside, leaning against a yew,
Most carefully at ease. Then he will light
A delicate cigar that fills the grove
With a fantastic odor, like, we'll say,
Faint musk that creeps on burning pine.
You will approve the quality, Famette.
That is his signal.

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Fam. Oh!
Mas. Long as he puffs,
And soft, white rings twirl upward to the leaves,
The lashes fall. And when, grown gently weary,
As 'twere half accident, from his high thoughts
Remote, he clears the cindered tip—like this—
The whip is still.
Fam. Where, where am I?
Mas. In hell,
Sweetheart.
Fam. Who are you, Masio? You are not
As these that suffer speechless.
Mas. Pinch the difference!
A little learning, and a few opinions
That brought me here.
Fam. [*Moving aside with him*] What did you do?
Mas. I spoke
The truth too near the ear of Cordiaz,
And there's no greater crime.
Fam. You are a prisoner?
But you're not guarded.
Mas. No, they leave me free,
In hope I'll run. Then they will shoot me down.
And you—what brought you here? Ten pesos
Could never buy you—nor a hundred either.
Fam. I mean to lead these men to join Bolderez:
Mas. What! Lead them out?
Fam. And you will help me do it.
Mas. Well, when I want to die. You're mad.
We're all
Sprats in a net. *You'll* not get out, once let
The master see you. Better hide those eyes——
Yso. [*Running and catching Masio by the shoulder*]
You lied to me! You lied! They've got my Grija!
Down in the lower yard!

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Grija. [*Entering and making his way to her*] No! Here I am.
Safe in, old tear-box.
Yso. Holy Mary!
[*Tells her beads rapidly as he leads her aside*]
Fam. [*Aroused*] Men!
If Osa looked from yonder mountain scarp,
Would she descend to lead such currish hearts
To liberty?
Gon. We are not dogs.
Fam. Then shame
To bear the life of dogs!
Ben. What do you know
Of Osa?
Fam. Know? Does she not guard the shrine
Cherished ten centuries in your secret hills?
Priestess and princess, daughter of your kings,—
The ancient poet kings who ruled and sang
In palaces where now your huddled huts
Give you a slave's foul shelter!
A Voice. Will she come?
Fam. To such as you? With heads hung down, and backs
Bared for the whip? The moment that you hold
Your manhood dearer than your life, she'll stand
Before you. Then you'll see——
Mas. For God's sake, hush!
The master!
Ben. [*As all look left*] No, it's Coquriez.
Gon. With his Gringo.
[*Coquriez enters with Chartrien. They cross right*]
Cha. Leave me alone.
Coq. My soul, am I not sick
Of your dumb lordship? Now the master's here,
I hope, by Jesu, that our ways will part.

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[*Turns and joins the men, leaving Chartrien seated on the stone step of one of the doors to the long hut, right. Megario enters unseen and stands watching, left. They gradually become aware of his presence, and all are silent*]

Meg. Coquriez!

Coq. [*Crossing left*] Here, sir!

[*The tension relaxes slightly. Lissa and Ysobel quietly distribute food and the men eat in silence. Famette keeps in shadow, a shawl over her head, and vainly tries to hear what Megario and Coquriez are saying. They talk in low tones at left, then move centre, front*]

Coq. Shoot the Gringo, sir?
I thought he was to live.

Meg. It must be done
To-morrow.

Coq. I'll do it.

Meg. Take him on the road,
And don't come back with him.

Coq. To-morrow, sir?

Meg. At day-break. Drop him cold. I was a fool
To let him live a day!

[*Famette has advanced too far and Megario sees her*]
Who's that?

Coq. There? Oh!
I bought her in last week.

Meg. The day I left?

Coq. I think 'twas then.

Meg. An old one,—so you said.

Coq. About the Gringo, sir,——

Meg. What is her name?

Coq. Famette.

[*Famette goes back to the women*]

Meg. A figure too.

Coq. It's not so easy
To drop a white-skin——

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Meg. Come, Famette! Come here.
[*She turns and comes slowly*]
Old? By the gods! Why did you lie to me?
Coq. My lord . . . . . you like none past fourteen.
She's that
Half over.
Meg. Brazen devil! Come, Famette.
I like your name. I like your face too, girl.
Don't be afraid. Show me your eyes. You won't?
Where have I seen you?
Fam. I'm a stranger, sir.
My home was in the north.
Meg. That fester-spot!
A stranger? Then we must be good to you.
Where do you sleep?
Fam. There, in the hut.
Meg. You'll have
A better soon. Next time I'll see your eyes. [*Going*]
Mind, Coquriez, to-morrow! Do that well,
I'll pardon this. [*Exit*]
Fam. What is't you do to-morrow?
And why do you need pardon? You who serve
So well?
Coq. My pretty bird, I've been too slow.
Fam. Too slow?
Coq. I've limped, and lost.
Fam. Ah, Coquriez!
Coq. You're not afraid of *me*. You look at me,
And turned from him. That's honey on his curse!
Fam. He curses you? And you do all for him!
All that he asks you,—things he dares not do
With his own hand.
Coq. You care for that?
Fam. You risk
Your soul, perhaps,——

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Coq. 'Tis certain. Pray for me,
Chiquita.
Fam. When?
Coq. To-morrow I must leave
The Gringo in the marshes.
Fam. Oh, 'twas that!
And paid with curses——
Lis. [*Calls, as a new batch of men come in*]
Come, Famette! Here's work!
Fam. We'll talk again. [*Hurries to Lissa*]
A man. The beans are cold.
Another. Soured too!
Gray Moses, here's a life!
Mas. Do you complain,
O, comrades? Now your hour is come? The pearl
O' the long ungarnished day? The holy hour
Of—beans? Why, think! What do we live for, men?
For sweaty moments battling 'gainst the sun
To strip the thorny hennequin? For nights
Of bitten sleep in unwashed pens? Not so.
Lift up your cups! Here is the crown of toil!
Each day we reach our life's supremest dome,
And know we're there! Can man ask more? Even kings,
Though the gold frontal of munificence
Is bowed before them, yet must fretting guess
The morrow's store. But we, my friends, we know!
Then let each separate and distinct legume,
Dear as the Egyptian treasure lost in wine,
Delay as preciously——
Coq. [*Cutting him across shoulders*]
Come down from that!
There's more for you, my friend, i' the lower yard.
I'll tie you up.
Fam. O, Coquriez, let him go.
You should not care. His tongue was born with him,
And God may mend it. Let the fool alone.

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Coq. Hmm, if you ask me——
Fam. Thank you, Coquriez.
I'll stand for him he'll not offend again.
Mas. My tongue is glue. 'Twill stick to its place.
A man. Fish! fish!
Another. He's had his share.
The man. Not half a cup!
O, Jesu, I am starved. I did my stint,
And helped the boy, Famette. Can I do that
On half a cup?
Fam. No, Berto, here is more.
Yso. The Gringo does not eat.
Fam. I'll take him this.
[*Fills cup from bowl of beans and goes to Chartrien, who is still seated on the step, listless and observing nothing*]
Fam. Señor?
Cha. Who spoke? O, you, Famette? No, thanks.
I can not eat. [*Turns from her*] That's twice I've heard the voice
Of Hernda. Madness creeps, but surely comes.
Fam. [*Over his shoulder*] You must escape to-night.
Cha. [*Facing her*] Escape? To-night?
Fam. Here, hold the cup, and eat. Do, sir! We're watched.
To-morrow Coquriez leads you to the woods,
Comes back alone——
Cha. At last I know my hour.
Fam. But you shall live. Last night I worked till day
At that locked gate. 'Tis open. None suspects.
Outside there's water in a flask, and bread,—
Beneath the cactus at the left——
Cha. But how
Get out? I am locked in at night, and watched
At other hours.
Fam. Eat, eat, and listen, Señor!
To-night a flogging in the lower yard

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Will empty this. You'll go with Coquriez.
Urge him to bring you back. Say you are ill,—
For that you are,—and come. Here I shall hide,
And as you pass, will suddenly step out
And speak to Coquriez. You fall behind,
In shadow of my hut, move round it, wait
This side, then see what's next to do.
A man. [*Calling*] Famette?
Where is Famette? She doesn't count the beans.
[*Famette goes back to the men*]
Cha. It is a lure. If I attempt escape,
Then Coquriez shoots me dead, his soul just clear
Of murder.
Coq. [*To Famette*] Our Gringo's learned to eat, I see.
Cha. Now do they change confederate nods, and gaze
Their mated thoughts. Down, down to dust, my heart!
The struggle's off. I'll fight no more. Yon stars
Have rest for me. Is't so? Vain footing there.
What rest have they, that share with man the surge
From life to life? There Jupiters unfound
Whirl cooling till their straining sides may bear
Ocean and land and clinging bride of green;
And Saturns, nameless yet, cast travailing
Their ringed refulgence. Not the frozen moons
May fix in stillness, but sweep captive back
To flaming centres when their planets call.
There old, dead suns, that think their work is done,
Meet crashing, ground to cloudy fire whose worlds,
Far driven, traverse time and know men's days.
Ay, one may go beyond the ether's breath,
Farthest of all, to be another First,
Undreaming this our God. And I must shift
Eternal and unresting as those suns.
Then let Death hasten. He shall be as one
Who timely strips a wrestler of his cloak,

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And, kindly freed, I shall uncumbered leap
To other battle, finding armor where
I find my cause.
A man. [*To Famette*] My turn. Here, give me that.
Fam. The Gringo's had no fish.
The man. Then give me his.
He doesn't care. Has run already from
The smell.
Fam. I'll give you half. The rest
I'll take to him.
Coq. He'll come for what he wants.
Fam. No, he is sick, poor devil! [*Goes to Chartrien*]
Coq. Humph!
Fam. [*To Chartrien*] You'll take
The chance? There is no other.
Cha. It's a trap.
You risk your life for me, a Gringo? No.
Fam. You must believe me! Oh, what can I say!
Cha. Say nothing. Go.
Fam. I love you, love you, Señor!
Cha. You would persuade me.
Fam. Sir, the wine you found
Behind your prison door,—and good, clean bread,—
I put them there!
Cha. 'Twas you, Famette? I thought
That Coquriez did it,—feared I'd die before
The master came.
Fam. Not his brute heart! And then
That night of fever——
Cha. Yes! What then?
Fam. I lay
Outside your jail, my head against the wall,
That I might hear if once you groaned, or know
If sleep had come.
Cha. Can such love be for me?

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Fam. You must—you *must* believe me!
Cha. God, your eyes!
[*She lowers her head*]
. . . . . 'Tis madness, bred of these sun-poisoned days,
And nights without a hope. . . . . Look up, Famette.
I do believe you.
Fam. [*Kissing her rosary*] Mother, adored and blessed!
Cha. Wilt be a beggar soldier's bride, Famette?
Fam. You do not love me, Señor.
Cha. But I love
Your gentle heart that warms mine empty,—love
Your eyes, like memories burning,—and your voice
That's linked to an old wound in me,—but most
I love your soul that is as great as truth
And strong as sacrifice. You'll come to me
In Quito, if I make escape? I'll find
A way to bring you out——
Fam. You're mine?
Cha. Till death.
Fam. And after that?
Cha. I'll give you truth for truth.
Beyond this world I hope to meet a soul
Who did not walk in this, but ought to have,
For here her body dwelt. This side of death,
My life—a bitter one, that only you
Have sweetened—is your own, if you will have
So mean a gift.
[*Ipparro has entered the yard and becomes a centre of altercation. He starts out taking Lissa's boy, Iduso. There is a shriek from Lissa, and Famette hurries to her*]
Lis. My boy! My little one!
God strike you dead, Ipparro!
Fam. You'll not flog
The boy?

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Ipp. He didn't do his stint by half.
You know the master's rules. He's twelve years old.
Must cut three thousand leaves.
Fam. A man's full work.
And he's so small.
Lis. And sick he is. Two days
He couldn't eat.
Ipp. You women!
Fam. Let him go.
A little child, Ipparro.
Ipp. Let him go?
Am I the master of the hacienda?
He'll tie *me* up to-morrow!
Fam. It will kill
Iduso.
Lis. Such a little one, he is!
A baby yesterday,—to-day a man,—
How can that be?

[*An overseer enters left*]

Overseer. What's up? Come on with you!
The master waits,—burns like perdition! Come!
Come, all of you! The women too! Clear out!

[*Drives them out. Famette slips into her hut. Chartrien joins the men and follows last with Coquriez. They stop left*]

Coq. Won't see the show?
Cha. I'll not go on.
Coq. Come then.
I'll lock you up. [*They turn back*]
We'll have an early march
To-morrow, mate. Must hit the brush by dawn.
There's little sleep for me.
Cha. Shall I have more
In that hot pen?
Coq. [*Laughs*] You'll make it up, I guess.

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Cha. I understand. You'll murder me.
Coq. My soul!
Let's keep our manners, though we sit in hell.
My occupation's decent, nothing said.
The silent deed is clean, but mouth it once,
The hands will smell. Pah!
[*Famette steps out of hut*]
Here's my kitten!
A kiss, my honey-pot!
Fam. I've better for you.
[*Gives him a bottle of wine*]
Coq. My ducky! From the master's cellar!
. . . . . How——
Fam. No matter. It is good.
Coq. Thief of my soul,
A kiss!
[*As he attempts to embrace her she springs back, pointing left*]
Fam. Look, look! He's gone! The Gringo flies!
O, Coquriez, you'll be shot!
Coq. [*Stunned for a moment, springs off shouting*]
Help! Stop him! Help! [*Exit left, firing his pistol*]
The Gringo! Stop him!
[*Famette runs to gate right, where Chartrien is removing bar*]
Cha. Come! Fly with me! Now!
I can not leave you here!
Fam. Go! Do not stop,
However weary, till you're safe in Quito.
The wounded hare, remember, takes no nap.
Cha. Come, come!
Fam. No, I am safe. And there's more work
For me. They'll come back here to search. Nay, go!
Another moment and we both shall die!

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Cha. [*Kissing her*] I'll wait in Quito,—then a husband's kiss!

[*Goes. Famette puts up bar, then returns to her hut and sinks at door*]

Fam. If I could pray! If I could pray! How far
Seems that old God I knew! A playhouse God
Who never saw the world! [*Leaps up*]
They're coming back!

[*Sits again, abjectly, her shawl over her head. Megario, Coquriez, and peons, enter*]

Meg. Where is the woman?

Coq. There she sits,—the witch!

Meg. Stand up! Take off that shawl!

[*Famette stands up. A man snatches the shawl from her head*]

Meg. Famette! Not you?

Fam. [*Cowering*] I, master.

Meg. [*To men*] Search the yard. Turn every leaf
And stone.

[*The men scatter*]

Mas. I'll give that gate a look. [*Crosses to gate right*]

Meg. This was
Your drooping modesty! [*Turns on Coquriez*]
You fool!—to let
The man escape! By Heaven, you might have burnt
The hacienda down and not have made
My blood so hot!

Coq. It was the woman, sir.
She jumped before me, smiling like a devil,
And when I tried to pass she caught my knees
And held this thing up, saying 'twas for me.
I kicked her off——

Meg. No doubt!

Coq. And when I turned
The prisoner was gone.

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Meg. [*To Famette*] You saw him go?
Fam. Yes, master. Through the gate, like wings. And then
I gave the warning. Coquriez knows I did.
Meg. What did she say?
Coq. She cried "The Gringo flies!"
And pointed there.
Mas. [*Returning*] The upper gate is fast.
He went that way. [*Nods left*] Beneath the cypresses
Into the maguey fields.
A man. He'll not get far.
He has no water.
Meg. He will die in th' brush,
And I shall never know it. Alive or dead,
He must be found. I'll flog a man a day,
Until I see his bones.
Gon. [*Coming up*] He is not here.
We've looked in all the huts.
Meg. Ipparro?
Ipp. Sir!
Meg. Send men abroad, for fifty miles about,
To put the haciendas on the watch.
He must come in for water. Choose good men,
Who *ride*, and see no wenches by the way.
Coq. My lord, I've served you long——
Meg. Too long, you hound!
Where is your lady's token?
Coq. This, my lord.
She thrust it in my hand.
Meg. And left it too!
Coq. I knew 'twas yours.
Meg. [*To Famette*] A thief too, are you?
[*Famette crouches, drawing shawl over her head*]
Meg. True,
Coquriez, you have served me long. I'll add
You've served me well until to-night.

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Coq. O, pardon!
Meg. I trusted you. And held your hand as mine,
To make my wishes deeds.
Coq. 'Tis sworn your own!
Meg. Then prove it. Take this whip. Come, take it, man!
Now flog that witch.
Coq. Famette! A woman, sir?
Meg. The devil's second name is woman. Do it!
Coq. A heavy hand I've laid on men, my lord,
But never yet——
Meg. Her smile struck deep to make
Such putty of your heart.
[*Coquriez drops whip*] Pick up that whip!
You want its kisses, do you? Pick it up,
Or you shall feel them to your traitor bones!
I'll have you flogged together!
[*Coquriez slowly picks up whip. Famette rises, throwing off her shawl*]
Fam. Hear me, men!
For men you are,—not beasts. Your hands are strong
In ceaseless toil. Day after day you pile
Your master's wealth more high. Day after day
You sweat your way a little nearer death,
That he may kick your bodies from his path
And set your graves in hennequin. But know
Who toils may fight! The hand that lifts a spade
May bear a sword. The strength you give to him,
Use for yourselves. Your master is one man,
You are five hundred——
Meg. Gods! I'll stop your mouth!
You men there—go—you dozen at the gate—
Go to the dry-yard—load your backs with fibre—
And bring it here!
[*Men go out*]

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I'll teach you now, you slaves!
You are five hundred—yes—and I am one,
But in me is the might of Goldusan!
The power of Cordiaz is in my whip,
And back of that is iron-Hudibrand!
Kill me to-night, to-morrow you shall die,
Each dog of you,—you know it!
[*Men come in with fibre*]
Throw the stuff
Against the hut. There, pile it up. More, more!
Now, Coquriez, the gentle, you've refused
To ruffle your fond dove,—here's sweeter work,
And for no hand but yours. Put her within,
Then fire the hut. [*Utter silence*]
What terror's on you, beasts?

Coq. In God's name, sir, you dare not!

Meg. In the name
Of all who know how power is kept, I dare!
Move there, you dog!
[*Coquriez stands motionless*]
Do you refuse again?
Then . . . . in your heart. [*Shoots. Coquriez falls dead*]
Who'll be the next to stand on feet of lead
When I say "Do?" Gonzalo! Garza! Out!
[*The men do not move. Megario lifts his pistol*]

Fam. Spare them, Megario. I'll go in.
[*Enters hut, closing door*]

Meg. [*Trembling*] That voice!
Who is this woman? Speak! Who knows? I've heard. . . .
Bah! I'm a fool! . . . . . Take up that lantern there,
Gonzalo. Break it on the fibre. Move!

[*He stands with his weapon drawn. The door of the hut is thrown open and Famette appears. She wears a rich robe, gleaming white, with blue and gold cabalistic broid-*

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ery. In her hand is a sceptre, on her head a crown with a single star. The men, with cries of "Osa! Osa!" fall upon their knees, foreheads to ground, then leap up, changed, and glaring. They seem ready to spring upon Megario]

Fam. Shoot now, Megario! [*Silence*]
You dare not do it!
Kill me,—kill one of them,—shoot till your weapon
Pants its last murder, and a hundred hands
Will tear you limb from limb and bone from bone,
Till every separate shred of you be cast
To its own devil! Shoot, Megario!
[*His hand falls. Famette steps into the yard*]
Where are the masters who can help you now?
The mighty ones who know how power is kept?
Look on these men. Their blood sings as it sang
Through centuries gone,—with courage that was theirs
Ere ships came up like night on this doomed coast
Unloading hell!

Meg. Who are you, woman? Who?

Fam. The spirit of these people, absent long,
But come at last to be their hearts' old fire.
Four hundred years you've trampled on their bodies,
But see—look in their eyes—you have not slain
Their God.

Meg. Your name! Who are you?

Fam. Riven hills
May hide the shrine of long unsceptred kings,
And keep their royal secret year by year.

Voices. Hail, Osa! Osa, queen!

Meg. What do you want?

Fam. Three things, Megario.

Meg. What are they?

Fam. First,—
That I may pass from here, free as I came,
With every soul that will go out with me.

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Meg. The way is open. Go.
Fam. And you with us.
Far as the coast, where willing transport waits
To bear us northward. Then you may go free.
[*Turns to the people*]
There brothers wait you, men,—there freedom's tongue
Is beacon fire. The whole of northland sings,
A canticle of flame. You'll go with me?
Mas. [*Loudly*] We'll follow Osa!
Voices. Osa! Osa! On!
Fam. Gonzalo, choose you men, a thrifty score,
To fill the water-jars and get us food
From the hacienda stores
[*Gonzalo passes out, men following at his signal*]
The third demand,
Megario, is this. That key you belt
So close—
[*Megario claps hand on key*]
Yes, that,—it must be mine, to unlock
A dungeon here and free a prisoner
Whom you for love of torture keep alive.
Meg. No, that's a lie.
Fam. Deny it to the stars
That saw you yesternight steal up like crime
To a dark grating, saw you gloat, and fling
The crumbs that will not let your victim die,
Though scarce they give him life.
Meg. [*Gasping*] A lie!
Fam. The key,
Megario.
Meg. I will not——
Fam. In my hand!
[*Megario takes key from his belt and hands it to her*]
I thank thee, God, my hand may turn the key
That frees Rejan LeVal! Now forward, men!

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O, glorious to be men! Ipparro, walk
Beside our prisoner. Garza, be his aid.
Two days of marching, then the friendly sea.
And if you toil again amid these fields,
You'll take the fruit. On!
Men. Osa! To the sea!

[*Curtain*]

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ACT IV

SCENE: *The Grove of Peace, as in second act. Late afternoon. Two officers meet as curtain rises.*

First Off. So Cordiaz is fallen.
Second Off. Joggled down
At last, poor man!
First Off. When all the ghosts he made
Come back to weep his fall, I'll swell the flood
With half a tear, no more.
Second Off. Then you're for Vardas?
First Off. By glory, no! He'll open Goldusan
To every thief that knocks.
Second Off. Trust Hudibrand
To guard the door. Till he has plucked the goose,—
Then they may shave it for their part.
First Off. So, friend?
Second Off. Phut! Goldusan's his box of snuff—held so—
And as he pleases, tchew!—'tis empty.
First Off. Come,
I'll walk your way. [*They move, right*]
What of this truce? Goes 't deep?
Second Off. As flattery may plough. It is our croon
Of compliment to our new-seated king.
First Off. Nay, president. We're a republic now.
Second Off. Spell 't king or president, it means the same.
First Off. But with Bolderez ours, the truce should last.
Second Off. Why, 't may, till night. Bolderez, friend,
Is not the revolution.

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First Off. He's the heft of 't,
And 's made a full surrender.
Second Off. Made his terms!
His officers are guardians of the State,
And he—he's stallion of the court, submits
To curb and comb that he may prouder prance
And keep the herd at stare. Surrender? Lord!
I think it!

[*Enter Third Officer, from left*]

Third Off. What's stirring, friends?
Second Off. Sleep-walkers.
Third Off. Ay,
This amnesty makes idlers.
Second Off. So to-day,
But work brews for to-morrow.
Third Off. You've a secret,
And I've a guess that picks the lock to 't.
Second Off. Come!
These leaves are listeners.

[*They go off, lower right. Enter by path upper right, Señora Ziralay and Guildamour*]

Gui. To find you here
Makes my best hope a sluggard, far outgone
By th' dear event.
Señ. I came five days ago,
The princess with me, here to wait return
Of Hudibrand. That you have come with him,
Makes sober welcome blithe.
Gui. He's slack in health.
Señ. That's written plain.
Gui. What iron's in the man
That he yet lives?
Señ. He's been in conclave?
Gui. Yes.
Five nights he routed sleep from th' drowsy synod,

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And hung upon us turning every flank,
Till Protest paled and Patience bled at heart.
Señ. And at the end?
Gui. He held our sealèd bonds,
And Vardas sat secure.
Señ. The bonds? We own
Our railways now?
Gui. We do. And Hudibrand
Owns us,—that is, the bonds. A good, stout noose
For a nation's neck.
Señ. And all these days he's been
In th' capital?
Gui. In closest session, though
A stage-fed rumor held that he was gone
From Goldusan. The harried people fear
Assarian power, and on the jealous watch,
Keep Hudibrand in burrow.
Señ. He's gay-blown
With confidence. I hear from Ziralay
He made a careless peace with all the friends
Of tottering Cordiaz.
Gui. That carelessness
Was sea-deep cunning. Favors will go high,
They'll find. Megario gave full half his lands
For place in th' Cabinet.
Señ. Megario moved
In blaze of censure, and did well to escape
Singed of but half his goods. Two prisoners lost——
Gui. Ah, Chartrien and . . . . .
Señ. Rejan!
Gui. Be guarded here.
Fate rustles at that name.
Señ. O, Guildamour,
Fear is the silent warder that divides
Our secret hearts. Give it the tongue of daring,

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And like a blest interpreter 'twill bring
Our hopes together.
Gui. There is stir within.
Come from these walls, Señora. And if your hope
Is on the road with mine, I've news will make
The wayside sing. Winds gather here and yon
That may out-swagger even Hudibrand.
[*They go back along cascade path, as Hudibrand, Diraz, Mazaran, and Golifet come out of house*]
Gol. [*Holding up letter*] Nay, fearless majesty might take more note
Of this despatch.
Hud. That beggar's mewl?
Gol. There's power
In every word. LeVal must harbor strength
We do not know of.
Hud. Tush! That is the vaunt
Of weakness, not of power.
Maz. What is't he says?
Gol. Avers him free of this imposèd truce,
And gives a fair foe's warning he'll attack
Whene'er and how he can.
Maz. Well bragged.
Dir. His guns,
No doubt, are cooler than his pen.
Maz. What more?
Gol. Repudiates Bolderez, and declares
Himself the head of the Insurrectionists,
Sole authorized to speak and treat for them.
My lord, what shall I answer?
Hud. Answer? Humph!
Treat with a rag-pole? We'll not sag to that.
[*Re-enter, right, Señora and Guildamour*]
Hud. My dear Señora, is our freakish daughter
In hiding from us? We've not had her greeting.

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Señ. She knew you close engaged, my lord, and left
The hour to you. I'll tell her of your pleasure.

Hud. My steps are yours. [*To his companions*]
Each where he would, my friends.
[*Goes in with Señora*]

Dir. I'm for a swim.

Gol. And I.

Maz. The river? With you!

Gol. [*Leading left*] Bolderez' men are gathering opposite,
Behind the river woods.

Maz. The pick of camps.

Gol. They know it too. There's water, and the trees
Are cool and friendly.

Dir. Was it not resolved
Bolderez' men should join the Federal Guards?

Gol. They do, in th' main. This is a straggling wing
Left in the hills, that we have given leave
To station here.

Dir. That's prudence too.

Maz. Why so?

Dir. I'm windward of a whisper.

Gol. About LeVal?

Dir. He's circling in. Let Hudibrand laugh low
Or the enemy will hear him.

Gol. This LeVal
Was dead and buried,—three months out of life,—
Shook from remembrance as the stalest clutter,—
Now, save our eyes, he's jumped alive and rides
Our foremost thought! Enough to send a man
Back to his marrows. I shall pray to-night.

Maz. A plunge for resolution! That will cool it.

[*Exeunt lower left. Señora comes out of house and crosses to seat, right*]

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Señ. 'Tis five o'clock. No sign! But he will come.
He comes!

[*Enter Chartrien, lower right. They meet silently and clasp hands*]

Cha. My friend! I thought you far from here.
Safe in the capital. But nothing's strange
To those who've moved mid miracles. You've seen
LeVal?

Señ. I have.

Cha. I long to greet him. O,
Such walking of the dead renews the earth
And makes it habitable! I have heard
It was Famette who saved him,—added that
To array of deeds that must unlaurel all
The heroines of time.

Señ. There'll be an hour
To talk of that. Now you must see the princess.

Cha. Hernda is with you? *Here!*

Señ. And Hudibrand.
No danger there. He wants you now, and says
You'll find good grass if you will leap the stile.

Cha. [*Answering her smile*] So blind as that? Poor mole, he's been in th' ground
Too long. Will never get his eyes.

Señ. Ay, he'll
Deny the sun till 't bakes him in his burrow.
But Hernda,—O, what welcome waits you, friend!
The ivory-crusted temple, shut and sealed
To eternal airs, is now a fane of rose,
Whose cloistral stairs, that wound so futilely,
Will now through fragrant twilight lead you up
To windowed Heaven. Come! Come, take your own!

Cha. No! Wait. . . .

Señ. A lover speaks that word?

Cha. Señora,——

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Señ. That wound she gave you here is open yet?
But you were wrong, and with your wretched doubts
Assailed her in the hour she lay on rack
To save you.
Cha. On rack for me? She gave me up.
Gave me to him,—Megario,—knowing that
Meant death.
Señ. And yet you live.
Cha. I—?
Señ. Live. Do you not know
You were to die that night?
Cha. I've heard.
Señ. Those hours
She gained for you meant life.
Cha. She gained for me?
I saw his lips on hers.
Señ. You did. And I—
I saw her face. The dead are warmer. She
Could bear that touch for your sake, and on that
Bore too your curse.
Cha. For me? I'll hear no more,
Señora.
Señ. You will see her now?
Cha. Not now,
Nor ever. I am here by pledge, to meet—
A friend.
[*Masio enters lower right*]
Señ. Is this—the man?
Cha. No, but I know him.
He's seeking me, I think.
Señ. I'll leave you then.
Cha. [*Seizing her hands*] Nothing to Hernda!
Señ. Nothing. You and she
For what may come. [*Goes in*]
Cha. You, Masio? From Famette?

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Mas. No, from the camp.
Cha. The camp! But she is there?
Mas. That's guessing, sir. There's fernseed on her wings.
She flits invisible, then bat your eyes
You see her.
Cha. I've her word she'd meet me here.
Mas. Queer place. You come from Quito?
Cha. Yes. 'Twas there
I had her letter making this strange tryst.
I've travelled from that hour. Famette has left
Her name upon the air, and all the way
I heard it.
Mas. She's the bird of courage, dares
Go far as our LeVal himself. But here's
What brought me, sir. [*Gives Chartrien a letter*]
'Tis from LeVal.
Cha. His hand!
His living hand! [*Reads, pales, and stands silent*]
Mas. Bad, sir?
Cha. No, good. 'Tis good.
Mas. Then I'll be off. My head's no show variety,
But I'd not trust it long in th' grove of Peace.
We'll see you soon in camp?
Cha. To-night, I hope.
Famette holds key to that.
Mas. The first star bring you! [*Exit*]
Cha. [*Reads letter*] *When you see the princess Hernda, kiss for me the hand that gave me freedom. It was she unlocked my dungeon and nursed my bones to life. What I am is hers, and therefore yours. Le Val.*

Hast grown so spent, O Fortune, that one stroke
Must deal both death and life?—with hand that parts
The night, show too my rainbow loss? . . . . All, all

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My future sold to the gray usurer Grief,
Who gathers up as sapped and withered leaves
Time's unimagined buds! No eve, no dawn
With Hernda! No brief night that makes
The sun unwelcome as he golds desire,
The warm mist-flower where we lie its heart!
Unbrace thee here, my courage! Valiancy,
First god and last in man, unbuckle here!
. . . . How meet Famette? Smile on her smiles? Deceive
Her love? She'll lay her head upon my heart
And hear it crying "Hernda!" . . . . Hernda lost!
I must not dream here open to the risk
Of her unanswered eyes. Their lure would make
Dishonor, that on wreck feeds rampant, spring
Unshamed in me. I would forsake Famette.

[*Goes right, upper path. Hernda comes from house and crosses rapidly to him*]

Her. Chartrien! Come! [*He turns slowly and meets her*] You take my hand, here where
You wished me dead?

Cha. That you have offered it
Proves me forgiven.

Her. *You* forgiven? Ah,
Has my atonement swollen above my fault
Till I may nod a pardon where I thought
To kneel for one?

Cha. LeVal has written me. [*Kisses her hand*]
This kiss is his salute, and that 'tis his,
Not mine, makes my lips bold to leave it here.

Her. Forgiven! Dawn is on my sky, that hung
Unutterably black! Yes, it is true
I saved LeVal. From Fate's own arms I snatched
My treachery's sequence, though his meantime pain
Is ever writ against me. Yet I too

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Knew misery that might be mate of his.
And for that other wrong—here where we stand——
Cha. My wrong to you! Nay, don't forgive me that.
Leave me a wound to keep me ever paying
The debt of pain that solely eases guilt.
Her. I had to choose,—Oh, agony of choice!—
Between your death as certain as the night
And your surrender to Megario,
That seemed but death postponed, yet held a hope
Worth any hazard. That you live is proof
My choice was God's. My reasonless despair
Held Heaven's sanity. Ah, that you live
Is substance of reward, joy's permanent
Sweet soil, but there's a flower to spring from that,
A nodding ecstasy that I may pluck
For my own bosom,—is there not?
Cha. Don't—don't——
Her. You turn away? You've still a doubt of me?
Then modesty may save her frigid self.
I'll speak for love, the one best thing this side
Of Heaven. You've taken my hand, and now my heart,
And all myself would follow it. My heart,
My body, and my risen soul. Yes, risen!
My past of clay is quickened with a breath
That waits not death to know itself immortal,
And this is all my pride, that by that breath
I'm rich enough to give myself to you.
[*She waits for him to speak. He makes no answer*]
I am rejected, having but my shame
To cover naked love. Yet vanity
Finds me this scanted shroud. Seeing you here,
My hunger guessed at yours. I felt you came
To seek me, else my heart, timid with fault,
Had kept its silence, though my tongue had given
As now a friend's good welcome.

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Cha. I have come,
But not to you.
Her. For why then? I've an ear
Of caution. Let my veins, at too swift flood,
Grow slow as prudence in what work you will.
Now that our aims are near as once our hearts,
You'll let me help? I swear by both our souls,
And yours the dearer one, that our desires
Are one bent bow, and if our arrows speed
They'll kiss at the same mark.
Cha. I'm fathoms deep,
But in a sea as sweet as ever closed
O'er drowned felicity!
Her. Why are you here?
Cha. To keep an oath!—that kept is our division,
Yet forfeited would so untreasure me
That being's god would blush dishallowed way
Quite out such husk of man!
Her. An oath?
Cha. Oh, first
In made self-curses I'll unload some part
Of this stuffed loathing for the wretch I am!
Her. Nay, I'll not listen.
Cha. Star that was a maiden,
Do not believe I loved you when my days
Ran tribute at your feet,——
Her. Say anything
But that. Those days were mine, and true.
Cha. False, false!
For love is generous as the heart of bounty,
Giving defect perfection. Narrowed hours,
Beseamed and flawed, take from its seer-lit eyes
The unstinted, dear proportion secret yet
In Time's full dream.
Her. 'Twas I who failed——

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Cha. Not you!
That midnight moment held the dawn of this,
All this that now you are, and love had seen
The folded glory of yourself had love
Been there to see. But I cast dust upon
Your sleeping wings, and did not know your heart
Till wounds had laid it bare.
Her. How could you know
More than its native bosom where it dwelt
Strange and unguessed?
Cha. If I had loved,
Such soul of fragrance had not hid from me
This unbound blossoming.
Her. We must forget
Love's morning miracles forever missed.
His fair, warm day is left us,—sunset's gold,
And evening with the stars. That is enough
For me and you——
Cha. My pledge! I'm here to meet
Famette!
Her. Famette! I know her.
Cha. Know her! You?
Her. And know she loves. Then it is you she waits?
Cha. She saved my life. But that unvalued thing
Is debt's mere rubble. 'Tis her love makes up
The sum unpaid and out of reckoning.
And I—how can I tell you?
Her. If you loved,
Look up. No shame can be where love has been.
Cha. I've no defence,—yet say that you were lost
In midmost desert sands, and suddenly
A flower at your feet breathed of the woods
And darkling velvet shade where rest might be. . . .
Her. But that's a miracle.

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Cha. So was her love
To me. Or say that flam and falsity
Ensnarled your every way till no true thing
Seemed left on earth, and then in lifted flash
Truth's priestess eyes looked from a human face
And you were loved,—what startled warmth would say
Your heart yet lived? Would you keep back your life
In barren hug? Deny its sunless gray
To gentle eyes that asked but leave to lay
Their radiance there?
Her. I understand. She gave,
And I demanded. So the gods decree
Her boughs shall bloom and mine go bare.
Cha. Oh, Heaven!
Her. You love her, Chartrien?
Cha. Silence be on that.
Her. I'll know it,—hear you say it. Is your heart
Mine, or Famette's?
Cha. My life is hers.
Her. Your heart!
Cha. Is yours.
Her. Ah! Then—I give you to Famette.
[*He kneels to kiss her hand. Hudibrand appears in door of house, left. Smiles, and crosses to them*]
Hud. Up to her lip, you rogue! A humble suitor
Gets humble favors.
Cha. [*Rising*] You, my lord?
Hud. Your hand,
My boy.
Cha. It was my head you wanted, sir,
When last we met.
Hud. Not so. I meant to save you,
But Hernda spiked my train. To have you die
Quite safely in a rumor was the sum
Of my intent against you.

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Cha. You're not well,
My lord?
Hud. Most well!
Her. He's lost some sleep.
Hud. Tut, tut!
Cha. You stay full long in Goldusan. I thought
You nearer home.
Hud. I'm cruising in the gulf,
By th' morning papers,—the *reliable* ones.
The gutter rags have guessed me,—but no matter.
I've seen the play through, and I go to-morrow.
Pouf! It has been a game!
Cha. You speak as 'twere
At end.
Hud. It ends to-day. [*Looks at watch*]
'Tis just the hour.
Now Vardas is proclaimed the president
Of a liberated people.
Cha. What of that?
Hud. He's bowing now. "I thank you, gracious friends,
Most loyal citizens——"
Cha. What's that to do
With freedom's war?
Hud. It merely ends it.
Cha. What?
You think we fought for that? A change of caps
Upon two brigands' heads?
Hud. Tut, you've won more.
You with some justice warred on Cordiaz,
But Vardas is of heart so liberal
His people shall be rich in privileges
As many and as fair as in Assaria.
Myself will vouch it.

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Cha. I will vouch it too.
As many pits fed with the souls of men,
As many images of God deformed
In lawless fray to hold the peaks of greed
And at the top sit on their goblin gold
Content with bestial purr, who might have touched
The heavens with song.
Hud. Is that for me, my boy?
Cha. As many lives tramped out in hunger's scramble,
As many factories where driven wives
Forget the altar dream of babes and home.
As many sweating traps where flames may feed
On flesh of maidens, leaving still, charred bones
Whose only fortune is to ache no more.
As many brazen mills that noise their thrift
Above the ceaseless shuttle of small feet,
While you, the great arch-master, think none hears
That drownèd pattering. As many marts
Where, in law's shadow, girl-eyed slaves are sold
To blows and lust. As many cripples thrown
Upon the dump-heap of a soulless Peace,
Each season piled to moaning wreck more high
Than ever War made in its darkest year.
As many holes where life must lie with death
For privilege of sleep. Oh, I could give
Black instances till yonder sun be set
Nor end your loathsome list!
Hud. A rare, hot sermon,
But I'm not Providence, that from my hand
Must pour unfailing bounty.
Cha. Humble, sir?
I thought you claimed a power that gave the world
The shape you chose.
Hud. But I must use the stuff
I find here. That I can't remake or change.

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So must my world show flaws and ugly spots
Due to its substance, not to my good pattern.
Cha. That stuff, sir, is the same that lifted us
From four feet up to two! The elements
That played like death upon it but aroused
Their conqueror. In the embrace of winds
It made us ships and gave us wings. From dust,
The very dust that choked it, grew the dream
That lifts it deathless, an eternized God.
And surely as your grip makes it a slave,
You teach it freedom. In your clutch 'twill find
Once more the need creative, and upswell
With power that shall leave you by the way
As heaving seas leave straws upon the sand.
You shall be *nothing*. As a dream that dies
With waking—lost so utterly
The sleeper knows not that it was—so you
Shall be a vanished thing that man born free
Can not reclothe in guess!
Hud. Peonia's sun
Has touched your wits. You still think of revolt?
Cha. I think of victory.
Hud. Your comedy
Is past its hour. Come, Chartrien, give it up.
Confess the war is done.
Cha. Bolderez' guns
Will make confession of another sort.
Hud. O, ho! I see a light. You have not heard
The morning news. Bolderez has come in.
Cha. Come in? Your couriers flatter you. He holds
The heights of Gila with five thousand men.
Hud. That's yesterday. To-day those brave five thousand
Are soldiers of united Goldusan.
Bolderez is adviser to the State,

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A tinker in high place, who solders fast
The civic split——
Cha. You dream! This is not true!
Her. Yes, Chartrien, it is true. We've lost Bolderez.
Cha. He—has—deserted?
Hud. No, he proves him loyal
To me, his master.
Cha. You?
Hud. He served me always.
You fool, this was *my* revolution.
Cha. Yours?
Hud. Bolderez led my troops. It was for me
You fed his bony beggars. Ha! For me
You stuffed their hungry pockets with your gold!
I loosed your fortune when I knew 'twould save
My own a gouge. But I've not dodged the score.
Those guns and horses for the Gazza scare
Cost me some paper——
Cha. You? My God! *Your* war?
Hud. I knew the storm would sweep out Cordiaz,
So strode its back that I might hold the bit
When came my hour. My boy, you fought for *me.*
I made you do it,—I, whom you have said
Shall be as nothing. Where's the mighty sea
Shall toss me as a straw——
Her. O, father, peace!
You see he dies!
Hud. Don't waste your tears. He'll live.
I've made good oxen out of wilder bulls.
Her. He cannot live! The pain of it, the pain!
When aspirations have returned as wounds,
Then even the soul must die!
Hud. They all get up.
Stout workers too,—quiet, serviceable,
Pestered no more with dreams. Here, give him this.
[*Offers a flask*]

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Cha. [*Rousing, pushing flask aside*] Ay, no more dreams.
[*Springs up*] But action! Keep Bolderez.
We have LeVal, whose undiscouraged heart
Bears on its tide the conquering desire
Of twenty thousand men!
Hud. Humph! Where are these
Invisible veterans?
Cha. Some gather now
About his banner,—some wait in the hills
Till they are sure it is his voice that calls,—
Some in your favor wrapped go to and fro
In your own camp, feeding a fire your gold
Can never light,—some dream till we have oped
Their prison doors,—in every part and corner
Of Goldusan, there's courage on the leap
To reach his side.
Hud. What dribble!
Cha. Rein this storm?
No human hand, nor Heaven's now, may leash it.
It is the throe when travailing Life is shaken
In absolute birth that makes undreamèd news
Even in the ear of God.
Hud. Fanatic! Fool!
Have I not tried to teach you——
Cha. Teach yourself!
Hud. Come, come!
Cha. I mean the words. The race has learned
Its lesson while you've played with sand. At last
The dumb, trod way has spoken 'neath man's feet,
And by that word uncovered he has learned
What he shall *not* be,—knows what heights of sun
Are his, and seeing takes his road,—no more
Battering in wild and bruisèd ignorance
A destiny of stone. Ay, consciousness
Has wakened in itself the unknown god
That gives the race its eyes. You, you a king?

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Who do not know that every man is heir
To kingship that must leave such thrones as yours
Outcoursed and little recked as the strewn toys
Of childhood!

Hud. Mud-sill dynasties. You know
That I am master.

Cha. Master? You believe
That man, at top of conquest, who has made
Nature his weariless serf, and set the yoke
From his own neck on her divinities,
Will seal to you—weak, myriadth part of him—
Those wizard captives bending to the dream
Of his new world? Gird you with fortune that
He wrenched from stony ages?—let you gorge
The magic fruit snatched by his perilled being
In starward battle up the abysmal steep?

Hud. I am a fact,—not words.

Cha. You can believe it?
At last on dawn-browed heights, with victor foot
On mysteries bound the genii of his wish,
He'll trail his hopes to kennel? Let you pluck
His universe unflowered, and shrink life
To growling brevity 'tween lash and bone?
A slave to *you?* Obstructive clod,
Who could not stir with one life-budding dream
Though holy imagination tipped with fire
Should score her script upon you!

[*A physical pain overcomes Hudibrand. Hernda runs to his side. He regains composure, his manner forbidding solicitude*]

Hud. I am patient.
One word of mine would send you manacled
To prison. If you are here to lay down arms——

Cha. I'm not.

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Her. O, father! The amnesty!
Hud. That shelter
Is not for him!
Cha. Then speak your word, and learn
You fight not men but man. Wide as the world
His spirit blows against you, and little part
You'll cage in this one shackled body.
Hud. One?
We'll drag the earth, or net the pack of you!
LeVal, marauding ghost, we'll prick his blood
Beneath his spectral mask. And that mad trull,
Famette, your holy maid——
Cha. She's safe from you!
God is about her as she walks among
Your hope-lorn slaves and touches their dead hearts
To life.
Hud. To folly they are sick of! Ah,
Once more I've news. Your swarthy Joan has fled,
And all her magic warriors of a day
Again are beggars.
Cha. Fled?
Hud. To her cactus lair.
But she'll trapse back between two bayonets,
Stripped of her phantom wings.
Cha. She is not gone.
That heart of truth! When she deserts LeVal
There'll be a breach in Heaven, and fiends may claim
The day for hell and you.
Hud. 'Tis mine without
Such warm avouch. Your chaparral cock and hen
Have parted company. Her followers now,
Cursing and naked, straggle to our camps——
Her. Your pardon, sir! You are deceived.
Hud. Ho, ho!

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Her. They're with LeVal. Not one stout heart is lost.
Famette but lends her captaincy to his
In needful absence——

Hud. You are much too wise.

Her. I know Famette.

Hud. You—what? Know *her?*

Her. I do.

Hud. This is the fruit of that mad jaunt,
Through Goldusan! Where have you seen her?

Her. Here.

Hud. Not here? That woman? Are you mad, my girl?

Her. I love Famette. If we were one, I'd be
But cinders in her saintly fire.

Hud. Here, miss?
You've had her with you? Sniffed and cheeped together,
And drowned my kingdom in a gossip cup?

Her. If men, the bravest, are but flies upon
Your monarch ermine, that with careless shake
You scatter, can you fear a woman?

Hud. What?
Mocked by a chit? I fear? You mannerless filly,
I've let you plunge and ramp o'er all my fields,
But I'll not have you whinnying at the fence
Till roadside jades break through! She has been *here?*

Her. She has. Dined at my board, slept in my bed,
And so shall do again.

Hud. I'll welcome her!
And send you trucking home! You shall not wait
For any whimsy this or that!

Her. But, sir,——

Hud. No trumpery packing,—no unready whine!
This hour! That you should moil your royalty
Touching such scum!

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Her. Nay, I was scum until she gave me substance.
I had no soul until she made hers mine,
No cleanliness of heart till I knew hers,
No knowledge till I looked through her clear eyes,
No riches till I wrapped me in her rags——
Hud. You're raving!
Her. No. Ah, father, father, I'm
Famette,—your daughter! I've not been in Cana,
But in the pits your greed has dug,—down, down
Where misery is so vile its own abyss
Shudders to hold it. Chartrien, now you know
My tale untold. I see your mind runs back
To light a way it travelled in the dark.
O, you were blind! I'd know you near though masked
In utter change.
Cha. I'm folded now in sun
That makes me blind again. Are you Famette?
Her. [*Showing her bared arm*] See this brown circlet
left that you might find
A trace of her? I've crossed the universe——
Through hell—and reached you, have I not?
Cha. [*Embracing her*] All sweet
Forfending stars now heap their fortunes one
And drop it on my heart that borrows heaven
To hold the imponderable gift!
Her. Ah, poor Famette!
Cha. 'Twas you—in that foul hacienda pen?
And would not speak?
Her. I meant to save you, sir.
And had I told you then, would you have set
So blithely off to Quito?
Cha. And left you there!
How can you think it?
Her. Do I, sir? Nay, love,
Nor ever did. I knew you'd ruin all
With your big "won'ts" and "don'ts."

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Cha. O, sagest heart!
But here you kept my joy-gates shut so long.
Why such slow mercy, golden one?
Her. You'll hear it?
There is a teasing devil in me, Chartrien,
That must have play.
Cha. Ah, no!
Her. Ay, and an ounce
Or so of cruelty, that would not let
Your frailty go unpinched.
Cha. Nay, 'tis not so!
Her. You'd rather think I put to royal test
Your godship? Wooed with lips so near your own,
And found you stanch to honor? That may be,
But I've a shameless reason dearer still.
I wanted all your love for Hernda,—all.
And had I said too soon that we were one,
Then on your breast my heart had never known
Which maid you clasped.
Cha. You ever, sweet!
Her. Yet she
Is dear. My joy could never be content
Within your heart beside unfaith to her.
She must have room there, not in name of love,
But truth. So you shall hold us both.
Cha. Like this!
Grow to my heart, O garland of myself!
Be breath of me, till, like a double tree,
Root, sap, and bloom are one,
And in our noble fruiting Time forgets
To mourn Hesperides!
Her. Heaven hold thy wish
The prayer thou meanest it!
Cha. One bliss is man's
The perfect angels know not. In the arms,

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Warm, rhythmic, round his battling soul, to feel
Spur of his noblest blood, and know his dreams
Are mated,—find in lightest winds that stir
Love's tremulous hair, the brave wing of his hope
That needs go farthest,—and when seasons fail,
And weary spirit turns from waste to waste,
Know lips that he may touch and touching kiss
The fallow world to harvest. Thus, and thus!

[*Hudibrand, forgotten by the lovers, has fought through another moment of agony, and advances, taking hold of Hernda*]

Hud. Are you my daughter?

Her. I am, but I've known hours
When shame, a cleansing fire, searched through my blood
For any drop that owned you father.

Hud. In!
Go in! [*To Chartrien*] And you—I'll rid the earth of you,
And take its thanks! [*Staggers with a return of pain*]

Her. [*Her arms about him*] O, father, let us help!
What is it, father?

Hud. Nothing. Keep away!
Away!

[*Throws her off. Enter, lower right, an officer attended*]

Off. Your majesty, there's sure report
LeVal makes ready to oppose his guns
To our weak garrison.

Hud. [*Ironic*] The spectre's near?

Off. Across the stream,—the east and wooded bank.
A hundred times our force could not dislodge
His guns from such a vantage.

Hud. Guns? LeVal?
He has no guns!

Off. You'll hear them soon. I beg
Your highness' pardon, but your dignity
Would not be touched if you should hasten out.

[*Enter, lower left, Golifet, Diraz, Mazaran*]

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Gol. My lord!
Hud. What is this tale? You, Golifet?
You are in charge!
Gol. 'Tis treachery, sir! I warned
Your majesty——
Hud. Come, what's the story?
Gol. This.
Bolderez' officers whom we gave leave
To station near us, thus to put more guard
Between the town and rebels that might creep
Down from the hostile hills——
Hud. This egg's all shell.
Come, sir, the meat!
Gol. They were in secret yoked
Most traitorously with LeVal, and all their men
Were coupled to his cause. They gave him cover
To lead his army up——
Hud. His army, sir?
Gol. His followers——
Hud. There may be treachery
Uncapped among us.
Gol. 'Twas by your advice
We gave them leave to camp——
Hud. I trusted fools!
Or traitors! You've a choice of names.
Off. I beg
Your majesty to come with us. They'll fire
At any moment.
Hud. Fire? Then we shall know
At last where we may find LeVal. You've wired
To Vardas, Golifet? He must despatch
The Federal Guards——
Gol. It is too late.
Hud. Too late?
Maz. We can not save the town.

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Off. The citizens
Are fleeing. Do not delay, your majesty!
[*Fire of guns is heard*]
Hud. Cowards! Before you fly, arrest that man.
Look to it, Golifet. You'll answer for him.
Let him be trebly guarded.
Gol. Is not this
The missing lord, Prince Chartrien?
Hud. Ay, that traitor!
Gol. At this hot juncture, prudence must forbid
A needless insult to the enemy
That may too soon be master.
Hud. Insult!
Gol. Come,
My lord.
Hud. By every god that was or is——
[*Guns again heard*]
Gol. Please you, retire, your majesty!
[*Men gather excitedly from different parts of the grove. Guests and servants desert the house*]
Maz. Come, come!
[*A shell breaches the wall, rear. Stones fly among the trees. The house is battered and portico torn away*]
Hud. Grant me this favor. Let me be the last
To leave the Grove of Peace. Ha, ha! The last!
Her. Come, father!
Hud. Go! I've asked a favor, friends.
[*They turn from him and pass slowly out. Hernda and Chartrien remain*]
Her. Now you will come?
Hud. When *you* have gone! Go, go!
[*More shells. Chartrien carries Hernda away, lower left*]
Hud. [*Alone, racked with pain*] My foe is nearer than those feeble guns.
Bah! I could crush them! Here I am fordone.

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No, no! I'll not surrender. I will live!
I'll keep my world. I fought for it, and won.
'Tis mine! I will not leave it to these mice
To scramble over. [*The agony seizes him*]
A coward foe, that gives
No even chance. Strikes from the dark, with blade
Tempered secure in undiscovered fire.
. . . . . Shall then the world go on and I not here?
I shall be here,—a pile of dust, no more,——
That is the hell of hells,—while other dead,
Who made them souls here out of faith and clay,
Race on unflagging,—on and leave me still,—
The everlasting mute! . . . . . Souls? That's a lie.
A ranting, tom-tom lie, to ease us on
The wheel. I'll none of that. The sick mind's pap!
Imagination's vent, lest misery
O'er-rack the world! Protective fume
Enclouding man's last grapple till none see
If he or Death be victor, and on the doubt
He rides to Heaven! . . .
. . . Was 't truth that Chartrien spoke?
The race has found its eyes? Man is no more
A blind and hopeless struggler cornered fast
By ills unconquerable?—his lusting wars,
Diseases, hungers, Hudibrands? Then what
A chance was there, my heart? If I had fought
Upon his side! . . . *That* battle would have made
Red Fate throw down her bludgeon,—won us place
To vanward of the gods! . . . . . If I had fought
With him . . . . . Obstructive clod! . . . . . My God! *My* God?

[*He dies. Sunset has passed, and the darkness grows rapidly until nothing is seen but the gleam of a fallen crown. Curtain*]

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A SON OF HERMES

A COMEDY IN FIVE ACTS

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CHARACTERS

BIADES, *a young Athenian*
PELAGON, *his uncle*
SACHINESSA, *wife of Pelagon*
PHANIA, *their daughter*
SYBARIS, *a neighbor's daughter*
CREON, *friend of Biades*
AMENTOR, *a senator*
MENAS, *friend of Pelagon*
CLEARCHUS, *an Athenian youth disguised as a dancer*
PHILON, *a priest*
STESILAUS, *a lord of Sparta*
PYRRHA, *his daughter*
ARCHIPPE, *his wife*
ALCANOR, *his son*
LYSANDER, *friend of Stesilaus*
HIERON, *a young Spartan*
AGIS, LENON, GIRARDAS, *his friends*
DIANESSA, MYRTA, THEONIS, NACIA, ARTANTE, *Spartan maidens*
THE EPHORS

Senators, citizens, soldiers, dancers, etc.

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ACT I

SCENE: *Pelagon's garden, Athens. Wall, rear, shutting off street. Upper right, path to street gate. Upper and middle left, entrances to Pelagon's house. Lower left, path to a neighbor's dwelling. Lower right, path leading deeper into garden.*

[*Enter, upper left, Pelagon, Stesilaus and Lysander*]

Lys. A gracious senate! If such welcome keys
The tune to come, then our ambassadry
Is concord's instrument, and we may bear
Fair music back to Sparta.
Ste. Tut, the smiles
Of Athens are as flying leaves, divorced
From the tree's heart, as apt to light
On vagrancy as merit.
Pel. Stesilaus
Bears hard as truth. Yet I was warmed to note
The council's greeting.
Ste. Ever Sparta's friend!
Pel. And friend of peace. The age no more can bear
The locked alarum of our rivalling States.
We must the groaning tussle bring to end,
Or ends the world.
Lys. 'Twas wisdom's cue you gave us,—
To say we had our Sparta's sovereign word
For Athens' terms.
Pel. Ay, hold your embassage
Unstrictured, friends. In that lies flattery
Each lord will take to himself and thereon feed

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A grace which will, in sort, come back to you.
What hour was fixed for answer? I lost that.
Lys. The last hour of the sun.
Pel. The crier stood
Wrong side of my good ear, and I'll not twist
To set the gossips nudging me to th' grave,
Robbed in a shrug of twenty grizzled years.
[*Looks about the garden*]
Where's Biades? He's always trailing here,
Save in the tick of need. I'd have him bid
The ambassadors lie at my house. Lysander,
You'll be my suitor to your comrades? Say
We've heart and room for all.
Lys. For all, my lord?
Pel. And more!
[*Exit Lysander*]
Ste. My Sparta thanks you, Pelagon.
Pel. Nay, such an honor shall not pass me, sir.
Now where is Biades?
Ste. Your nephew, friend?
Pel. Ay, Stesilaus. Bar my blood in him,
He'll fasten on your heart.
Ste. Report has been
Too dear his friend. What buzz about a youth
Of twenty-five! Sir, Attica is mad
To give him captainship. In Sparta now,
The spurring callant would be kept in ranks,
And yoked with Prudence till he learned her jog.
Pel. In ranks! I see him! Well, just in your ear,
He sweeps a pretty curvet. With my wife
His slave, and Phania neck-deep in love,
He rides the very comb of my poor house.
If you would say to him, hold here or there,
I'd take it not amiss. But I do love him.
And now a bout with th' cook. The pest sends word

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A double score of sudden guests are all
He'll have at table. Mine own table, sir!
Ha, there is Biades! He'll wait upon you.
Pray touch him as I've hinted. But no word
About our daughters, friend. We'll let that lie.

[*Exit upper left. Enter Biades upper right*]

Bia. Most noble Stesilaus, my heart greets you!

Ste. Greeting to Biades, whom Athens makes
Her general!

Bia. Would, my lord, this dignity
Were laid on senior years. Your Sparta's way
Is best,—to keep the cool, meridian bays
From youth-flushed brows. My moist and charmèd eyes
Spoke inward to my soul when they beheld
The ambassadors before the council, each
With staff unneeded, and gray locks that seemed
As wisdom's holy place.

Ste. You sat with us?
I did not mark you there.

Bia. I kept in modest shadow,
Which is youth's fairest mantle,—though my rank
Moves back for none. But, sir, the Spartan elders!
Ah, might I see more men in Athens who
Thus honor age, and age that honors men!

Ste. Breathe that into your shrines.

Bia. The gods who smile
On folly young, must weep when reverend years
And wisdom part. Mayhap you've noticed, sir,
In my good uncle here . . . . a falling off.
I would not speak but that I know your eyes
Can not keep curtain when the blabbing sun
Makes it no secret.

Ste. Somewhat I have seen.

Bia. Somewhat will grow to much ere you take leave.

Ste. I fear it, Biades.

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Bia. And yet, my lord,
Time has not carried him ahead of you
More years than half a score.
Ste. 'Tis t'other way.
I'm elder by that much.
Bia. Not you, my lord?
[*Muses flatteringly*]
The Spartan way is best. Was 't Pelagon
Led you to say you had full power to treat
With Athens?
Ste. It was he.
Bia. I thought it. [*Sighs*] Sir,
In the Athenian mind there dwells a child
No length of days can age. We do not grow
As Spartans. But our vanity's no dwarf.
Tops with the highest, you've some cause to know.
Ste. What of 't? Unlatch! unlatch!
Bia. The people, sir,
Always our rearward urge, knowing you've power
To assent to all they ask, will ask for more
Than all.
Ste. Think'st that?
Bia. In your brave time you've met
Athenians of the best. Didst ever know
One modest?—slow to ask for what he thought
His own?—or what he might by mere demand
Make his?
Ste. They are well stomached,—true. No doubt
They'll press us far.
Bia. They will. And if refused,—
Well, they are children,—and must bite and scratch.
With strutting rage, may pelt you out of Athens.
But why not say you are in part empowered,
And must return to Sparta with the terms
Before a vowed conclusion?

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Ste. Late for that,
Young sir. The tongue we used to the Council
Must serve in the Assembly. We have said
We have full power.
Bia. To treat, not to assent.
That was your word.
Ste. Hmm! Now the cloud is off
The dunce's script, and I read clear why you
At twenty-five have Athens' voice to sail
'Gainst Syracuse.
[*Re-enter Pelagon*]
Bia. No word unto my uncle!
Ste. My brain will serve.
Pel. They've come,—your comrades,—all!
If honor now were substance, my poor walls
Would groaningly unroof and beg the sky
For room to embrace it! Go you, Biades.
Repeat my welcome, with increase of grace
Your tongue is rich in.
[*Exit Biades, upper left*]
Now the full time comes.
We'll speak of that that's centre of our hearts,—
Our daughters, friend. This is the hour that ends
A watch of twenty years.
Ste. A patient score.
So long your daughter has been mine, so long
Has mine been yours.
Pel. Like flower upon a stalk
Long nursed and tended, comes the end upon
This day of budding peace. You've had no whiff,
No hint untoward, that what we did had best
Been left undone?
Ste. Sir, what I do, I do!
When we changed babes not past their cradle sleep,
My mind then glossed the act with comment fair

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As our unfructured hope. So does it still.
By Nestor, though I'm thitherward of prime,
There's none will say that with accreted years
I moult sagacity!
Pel. Eh, so! 'Twas well.
I've never doubted it. Here have I reared
Your Phania, Spartan-thewed, who now shall home
With Athens' gentle nurture in her veins
To hither yearn in blood of every son
She bears to Sparta. And you my Pyrrha bring
Back to her land to live a Spartan dame
Among Athenian mothers. So we feed
The unity we dream on,—quicken time,
Foresued, to give our tousing, touchy States
One civic heart.
Ste. Has Sachinessa kept
A secret tongue?
Pel. A nut not closer sits
About its kernel. And your wife, my friend?
What of Archippe? Did she hold for long
Against the exchange?
Ste. She did. Nor ever learned
To love your Pyrrha. For that cause,—and that
Our even trust might move with even faith,
Nor odds of grace to you,—I've stood her guard,
And made her comrade where a son might claim
The dearest post.
Pel. Good thanks, my Stesilaus.
From your wife's audit I'd not brush a doit,
But to the credit of my dame can set
A fairer sum. Æneas' curlèd lad
Lay not more dearly in his Dido's lap
Than your sweet Phania in the swaddling love
Of Sachinessa. Ay, she'll swear me now
That not to gain her own will she give up
Her foster darling.

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Ste. Humph!
Pel. The little duck!
She has so chucked herself into my heart
'Twill put me sad about to oust her.
Ste. Duck!
When I lose Pyrrha, sir, that hour I lose
This good right arm!
Pel. [*Meditative*] Hmm! So! . . . . Come, my friend.
The dinner's toward, and the host astray.
The love's deep-vouched that puts such duty off
For one more word. [*Pauses as they move left*]
We'll give no open voice
To our most dear concern till we have met
Our daughters.
Ste. [*Gloomy*] Met our daughters! Have it so.
[*Exeunt upper left. Enter, middle left, Phania and Biades*]
Bia. Come, Phania! The old cocks are off.
Pha. They're gone?
Bia. Good flitting too! I feared they'd perch till night,
Crowing the deeds of Stesilaus the Great
And Pelagon the Wise.
Pha. These Spartans! If
They'd rest their clubs without the door, our shins
Would give them thanks. Why are we so besieged?
Bia. Why, Phania, why? Because your father dotes
On dull and sodden peace that never was
Save in an old man's dream. We dine our foes!
The city must throw ope her gates, forsooth,
Lest the dear enemy should take some hurt
Scaling the walls! They'd bleed us as we sleep,
And Pelagon would vow the sword at 's throat
Were Sachinessa's dozing kiss.
Pha. Ho, hear
The captain speak! You go to Syracuse,
And not content? 'Tis well there's one cries peace.

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Bia. What's Syracuse? To conquer Sparta,—that
Were warrior's work! Your father robs me of it,
Bringing the water where I set my fires.
But come! I've not made love to a soul to-day
Save ancient Sparta. Ha! it is an art
That should be spared such sweat. The Heavens mean
That I shall pull to yoke these two days left,
And love take beggar's chance.
Pha. Ah, but two days!
Bia. Come to our myrtle nook——
Pha. Nay, Sybaris
Might turn me out. That is her royal seat
When you'll play consort.
Bia. What, my Phania? Dour?
Does Creon keep away?
Pha. I'm not for him.
You know it, Biades.
Bia. But he does not.
Too oft I find him here.
Pha. And Sybaris
Comes out of count, knowing you like this spot.
Yon path is worn of every blade.
Bia. Her feet
Can be so cruel?
Pha. You love her still!
Bia. Nay, sweet.
Not for three days. Believe me, cousin!
Pha. *Cousin!*
Athene save us! See her now,—the plague!
Bia. By gentle Eros, Phania, we'll be kind.
I loved her once.
Pha. How tall she is!
Bia. Ay, moves
A very sylph!
[*Sybaris comes on, lower right*]

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Syb. A fair day's greeting, friends!
Bia. We double it for thee.
Pha. My dearest Syb!
Do you turn snail, you keep your house so long?
Why, *hours*, I think!
Syb. Indeed!
Bia. Where lovers watch
The dial, that's an age.
Pha. Oh, so!
Bia. [*To Phania*] Do I
Not know?
Syb. An age? Ay, love grows old and fades in 't.
Bia. A thousand moons in journey o'er my love
Would leave 't no withered hour! By the fair soul
Of one who knows me true!
Syb. That is no woman.
Pha. A pretty oath!
Syb. But not a new one, dear.
Bia. Plead, Phania, dove! Let her not chide
Poor penitence on knee. In two days' time
I sail to war, yet stony Sybaris
Would break love's wings with doubt—put me aboard
With sighs to sink my ship——
Pha. Nay, Sybaris!
I'll vow him constant now.
Syb. Inconstancy
Once stopped for breath, and fools came with a chair.
Bia. No thaw in thee? Plead, Phania, sweet! Your lips
Are unimpeached where mine too oft have worn
Conviction's droop.
Pha. Forgive, dear Sybaris!
Bia. Ay, be my tongue! Tell her that as the bee
Betrays the honey-buds yet hiveward flies,
I've left all by-roads for the true home-path.

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Syb. Then you have trailed all others stale. There's none
Left new but that.
Bia. Tell her when I have sailed
From Athens' eyes into the sun that eve
May skirt with blood——
Pha. No, no!
Bia. —to walk with you
The haven's brim, watching the waves that throw
The sea-heart there, and know that from my ship
Pulses a heart to love's dream-sandalled feet
As constant as the sea to Athens' shore.
[*Sybaris moves relentingly nearer. Biades behind Phania, who sits on bench, leans to talk into her ear, but keeps his eyes tenderly on Sybaris*]
Ah, tell her, Phania, sleep is slow to come
Where warriors bed, and unforgiven hours
Are thorny comrades for an age-long night.
Syb. Then here's my hand. Pray Pallas 'tis no fool's!
Bia. Yours too, my Phania! In one breath I seal
Judge and defender mine! [*Kissing their hands*]
Now with my ship
Will prayers go tendant, mending every sail
That storm may batter. Typhon, whirl the sea
To insurrection,—send her meekest wave
To crinkle round the sun, and hiss from Heaven
The mariner's port-star,—I shall be safe
While I have implorators fair as ye
To melt the gods!
Syb. Ah, Biades, thou must
Be loved or die. Is 't heart or vanity,
That's so insatiate?
Pha. Nay, you have forgiven!
Syb. But will not coo yet. Is that Creon comes?
[*Looking to upper right*]
You'll meet him, Phania?

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Pha. He knows his way.
Bia. Has news!
I'll pick the pigeon. [*Goes up right*]
Pha. O, my Sybaris,
Thanks for this generous peace! But who could long
Be harsh to Biades?
Syb. Such steel 's not in me.
I but stood off, a shadow of resolve,
To hear him woo me back. His coldest words
Are ta'en from music, but when warm in suit,
Then music sues to him.
Pha. Woo *you?* Didst say
Woo you? Couldst think—couldst dream—couldst let blind sense
So flatter?
Syb. Blind? Well, you've no eye to lend.
Pha. His words were all for me, and through my heart
Were sifted to your ears.
Syb. For you, my dear?
Now what a gosling 'tis!
Pha. Oh! Ask him then!
Syb. You'll beat that bush. I have no doubt in cover.
[*Biades returns with Creon*]
Cre. You'll not go out?
Bia. No, friend.
Cre. I warn you, sir!
It is your reputation left i' the street
That knocks for you.
Bia. 'Twill care for itself.
Cre. Nay, come!
Soon every ear in Athens will be crammed
Wi' the tale.
Syb. What tale?
Cre. 'Tis said that Biades
Was cap and spur to riot that defaced
The Hermæ yesternight.

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Bia. Denosed, you mean.
Pha. O, do not jest! I tremble, Biades!
Cre. You must o'ertake the lie, my lord, ere winds
Be up with 't.
Bia. Let it fly, my Creon. When
Its wings are worn 'twill down for any heel
To trample.
Cre. Not this feather. It broods on the air,
And its dark issue makes eclipse your sun
Can push no beam through.
Bia. Sinon's pate has hatched
The ebon chick.
Cre. You're not far out. He wants
The generalship.
[*Enter Hippargus, upper right*]
Bia. Here comes a tongue to market.
Most purchasable, tho' neither cut nor dried.
Cre. The senate's messenger!
Bia. Greeting, Hippargus.
Hip. Greeting, my lord,—and I must lay command
On that, for you are charged on the instant to appear
Before the Council.
Bia. The instant? Cramped to that?
And what to do there, sir?
Hip. Give proof you touched
With no profaning and injurious hand
Our threshold gods.
Bia. Go gently back, Hippargus,
And tell the senators I pardon them,
Knowing they do mistake. They would not lay
So dull an antic on me, and this charge
Is meant for Bico, my fat monkey here,
Whom they may have for trial.
Hip. Spare such jest,
My worthy lord. A hundred tongues have sworn
You said in open street, nor cared who heard,

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The guardian Hermæ might be nipped of ears,
And noses too, yet serve our pious turn,
Since they smell out no faults and citizens
Confess none.

Bia. Ah! Do they make wit a crime,
Who have no taint of its color? Say 'twere red
The senators would never be mistook
For woodpeckers. Gods! When they prate, I know
Athene's owl is stuffed, and her wise serpent
An old-year slough! Off now! Your pannier's full.
Trot and unpack.

[*Exit Hippargus*]

Cre. Out! Follow, and deny
This answer! Dare you, standing on the top
And slippery point of fortune, throw your cap
In Heaven's face?

Bia. Dare I do less? No, friend.
The Council fears me, and would see me down.
My power is in the people, who for gold
And merry flattery give me their love.
But now they're on the quibble how to turn,
To me or Sinon. I'll not let them see
My office brought to question, and myself
Outfaced by perjurers in Sinon's keep.
Nay, when they find I'm not the senate's groom,
But know myself, their pride will know me too,
And I shall go to bed as I rose up,
The Athenian general.

Cre. The street will bellow.
I'll listen to it, and pick interpretation
From 'ts roar. You'll come with me?

Bia. Though oracles,
On every curb and step, begged audience,
I'd not go out.

[*Exit Creon*]

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Pha. Oh, me!
Bia. Why so? I'm not a hare
To jump because a leaf falls. Wag the hour,
And Pleasure wait on us! If she fill not
My cup to-day, I fear it must go empty
A good twelvemonth. There are fair maids
In Syracuse, but they'll peer on me through
A crimson lattice.
Pha. You'll not see them, sir!
Or break a thousand oaths! So oft you've sworn
No beauty out of Athens could persuade
Your eyes to worship.
Syb. Then the Spartan maid
Lodged here will let him sleep.
Bia. What maid is this?
Pha. Why, Pyrrha,—Stesilaus' daughter.
Bia. Here?
Pha. Ay, everybody's here.
Syb. I saw her leave
The chariot. Such clothes!
Pha. *No* clothes, you mean!
Syb. [*In shocked aside*] Just to the knees!
Pha. And open to the hips!
Syb. You say it!
Pha. And manners, none. I took her nuts
And sugared poppy seeds. She said she kept
No parrot.
Syb. Here's a guest!
Pha. And when I said
I *lived* on them——
Bia. My dainty!
Pha. —then she asked
If that made me so little!
Bia. Ay, they feed
To grow in Sparta. Breed but monsters there.

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No arts, no grace, no soft and tendrilled speech
That creeps to ends of being and looks back
Exultant and afraid. They are not men,
But, wearing human port, would force on us
A beastly comradeship. Set me to woo
A toad bred in a ditch of Attica,
But not a maid of Sparta! Were she fair
As was Persephone when she drew the god
From nether earth, yet sprung from that hard soil,
I'd let her beauty pass.

Syb. Hist, Biades!
She's yonder.

[*They look middle left, where Pyrrha appears*]

Pha. I like the garden best when 't wears
Pale Cybele's gown. Apollo makes it harsh
In black and gold—Ah, Pyrrha! You have found
Our blossomy corner. Welcome to it, and know
My neighbor, Sybaris,—and Biades.

Pyrr. I greet you, friends of Athens.

Pha. Will you sit?

Bia. [*Who has not removed his gaze from her since her entrance*] A walk! That was your wish.
I'll show the paths.

Syb. Nay, here's a seat.

Bia. There's Artystone's rose,
Brought from the Mysian stream——

Pha. She'll stay with us.

Bia. The ivory cup of Isis, where each night
Her one tear falls,—and flowers whose sisters blow
In walled Ecbatana.

Syb. Come, sit by me,
Dear Pyrrha.

Pyrr. I would see the garden.

Syb. [*Rising*] Would?
We'll guide you then.

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Pha. Ay, who would dawdle here?
Bia. But rest a moment, Pyrrha. I mind me now,
That from this spot the eye may best o'ersweep
The full design. Yon mass of planes——
Pyrr. I'll walk
Alone. [*Moves off, lower right*]
Syb. Well!
Pha. Said I not?
Syb. Does nothing that
She's asked! And stares as though a woman's eyes
Were made to see with, when their chiefest use
Is not to see!
Pha. Crude as her Spartan rocks!
Bia. I'll follow.
Syb. Nay, she'd *walk alone!*
Bia. She's Athens' guest.
I'll not be rude, whatever lack in her
Provokes me to it.
Pha. Nor shall I, by all
The grace in th' world!
Syb. You shame us, Biades.
We'll go with you.
[*Each takes an arm of Biades as he goes right. Pelagon enters, upper left*]
Pel. Daughter, this way!
[*Phania returns reluctantly. The others pass off, right*]
Pel. My chick,—
Nay, I'll be brief. I know young feet would flock.
Pha. O, father dear, I'd please you first! [*Kissing him*]
Pel. Well, well! . . . . .
You've seen Lord Stesilaus?
Pha. Just a peek.
Pel. Nay, he's no bear.
Pha. He'll bite though. I know that.

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Pel. Now, Phania, now! I have a reason, miss,
A most dear reason you should win the love
Of Stesilaus.
Pha. Love!
Pel. I mean, my duck,
A father's gentle love.
Pha. But, daddy, he's——
So tall!
Pel. He has a heart, my daughter.
Pha. Fum!
Are you so sure?
Pel. Find it the shortest way.
Remember he's your—hmm!—remember—hmm!—
That he's a man—as I am—and his pride
But April frost. Be as he were myself——
Pha. As you? Oh, dear! [*Under his arm*]
And must I cuddle so?
Nay, that's for my own fa-fa!
Pel. Little Phania!
I'll lose my pipit,—lose my bonny bird!
Pha. Lose me? O, never, daddy, never! I'm
Your pipsey, wipsey, umpsey, ownty own!
Pel. [*Resolutely*] Wait here. I'll send him by.
Pha. But, father, why——
Pel. Nay, that's my secret. Not for little birds.
[*Exit upper left. Phania waits until he disappears, then turns flying, and vanishes lower right. Archippe and Sachinessa enter, middle left*]
Sac. Blest be Athene, there's nobody here!
The house is overrun, and Pelagon
Has twenty shadows, one at every door.
Out, in,—in, out,—with ears like aprons held
For every whisper! Here we're safe to talk.
Arc. O, dearest Sachinessa, what's to do?
Sac. We'll go to Philon. If he says confess——

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Arc. Confess? I'll never do it! I will take
What way he will but that, though 't be the one
Leads out of life. You do not know my lord!
Sac. Your Stesilaus is no god, Archippe.
I'll tell you that.
Arc. If it should come to him
We never changed our daughters! If he learns
That twenty years I've made him wear the hood,
His roof no more would shade me. Nay! Confess?
Oh, Sachinessa, I should lose him quite!
Sac. That could be borne, I think.
Arc. But lose my Pyrrha?
Be driven out from her? See her no more?
Sac. There, friend, you stir me. Such a piece of man!
To strike like that because a woman's wit
Has clipped his own! He's not suspected you
In all these years?
Arc. Not once. I've watched myself
As I were my own jailer, fenced my heart,
And made my love a thief that gave my child
No open looks, but by her bed at night
Stole comfort as she slept.
Sac. Not I, Archippe!
I've laughed above the snores of Pelagon,
Knowing my darling near, whom he thought far
As Sparta. Come! You're taller by a head
Than I, yet die with quaking. And I thought
Each Lacedæmon wife a lioness.
Arc. Ah, but their lords are lions.
Sac. Well, they've mane
Enough, but they'd not shake it in my face.
Arc. Will you confess?
Sac. Why, no. For Pelagon
Would play the spousal saint, sit on the clouds,
And with a piety intolerable

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Forgive his perjured wife. What soul could bear it?
But I'll not part with Phania, know you that!
Arc. What then?
Sac. We'll go to Philon. How to keep
Our secret and our daughters,—that's a nut
To break the oracle's teeth.
Arc. If 't can be done!
Sac. It must be done, Archippe. Come,—I hear
A chatter. This way out.
[*They leave, upper right. Biades, Pyrrha, Sybaris, and Phania enter lower right*]
Pha. What of our garden,
Now all is seen?
Pyrr. Here gods should live, not men.
At every turn I seemed to lose the step
Of a departing deity.
Syb. We are content
With our Athenian lords, and seek no charm
To turn them into gods.
Bia. [*Showing a locket*] I've here a charm
Does more than that. This jewel webbed
In mystic rings—and set——
Syb. The Persian gem!
You promised me——
Bia. It is a magic stone,
That gazed upon by a true-minded maid——
Pha. [*Securing the trinket*] I'll see it, sir!
I've heard you vow your bride
Should wear this locket.
Bia. [*To Phania*] So she shall.
[*To Sybaris*] None else!
[*To Pyrrha*]
You hear my oath. Come, Sybaris, sit here
And, Phania,—come! You both shall peep at fate

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Through a ruby portal, if your hearts be true.
Now fix your look——
Pha. We'll see the same!
Bia. Not so.
Each fortune's connate with the gazer's star,
And tinted as she dreams. Direct your eyes
With flawless constancy, or you'll see naught.
Pha. Not lift them once?
Bia. Nay, fasten every thought
Deep in the jewel's fire, till I have said
The Persian chant of welcome to the spirit
Whose magic you shall see.
Pha. A spirit? Oh!
Bia. But she is fair,—framed as divinity
For adoration.
Syb. She!
Bia. Lift not your eyes.
[*Stands behind Phania and Sybaris and makes the incantation an ardent address to Pyrrha*]

Spirit of Fate, what mystical wooing
May win thee to pause where we pray?
Misers of Dream their locks are undoing,—
Mistress of Keys, wilt thou stay?

Priestess, thyself, O fairer than dreaming,
Art deity's answer to prayer!
Dusk in thine eyes is the seer-burthen gleaming,
And moon-wands at rest in thy hair.

Far-foot Desire is lost in the winding
Of valleys and gardens of thee!
Hoop of white arms is circumferent binding
The star-pastured world and me!

[*Sybaris throws the locket at his feet. He turns and sees that she and Phania have risen and are staring at him*]

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Pyrr. [*After a silence*] I do not know this game. Will
leave you to it. [*Exit, middle left*]
Syb. And I'll go home! [*Exit, lower left*]
Pha. And I'll go tell my father!
[*Exit, upper left*]
Bia. And I'll go stand in th' donkey mart and bray
Till a farmer buys me! Witched, and by a Spartan!
Mad as the fleeing ass of Thessaly! [*Exit, upper right*]

[*Curtain*]

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ACT II

SCENE: *The same as first act, a few minutes later. Phania is discovered in rear. Stesilaus walks frozenly back and forth, front, while she timidly advances and retreats*]

Pha. [*Approaching*] I'm Phania, sir.
Ste. [*Looks at her incredulously, then walks left, leaving her centre*] My blood and bone in that!
What dwarf-dish has she fed on? Ugh!
Pha. [*Crossing*] I've come
To walk with you. You like our garden, sir?
We've bulbuls in it,—and wee, visiting wings
From the unknown south. Can see them if you watch
A place I know. They dart like breathing bits
Of chrysoprase and sard o' the sun.
Ste. Humph! You
Are Phania?
Pha. [*Braver*] Troth, I am! Wilt see a nest—
So small as—that! Could put it on your thumb.
[*Takes his hand*]
I'll show you, sir. Don't you love *little* things?
They wiggle to the heart, my daddy says.
You love my *daddy*, don't you?
Ste. Ugh! Your—Ugh!
Pha. [*Defensive*] *I* love him,—yes, and all his friends.
I do,
Though they're—so tall. I come just to your beard.
See now! [*Leans against him*]
Ste. Get off! You squeaking pewit! Ugh!
Pha. [*Quiveringly*] Have I displeased you, sir?

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Ste. Displeased me? No.
You make contentment creep on honored bones
Far back as Lacedæmon's earliest grave
That opened for my house. You turn my blood
That's not yet earthed, and hot as Sparta's pride,
To drops that mutiny 'gainst their own succession
And beg to be the end. Displeased? Oh, no!
[*Retires, rear*]

Pha. Oh, sir——

[*Fails, and goes off weeping, lower right. Enter, upper right, Biades and Creon*]

Cre. But this confusion, many-throated,
Has single voice and warns articulate.
A treasonous tempest rises, and you stand
A god indifferent when you should bethink
Yourself most mortal. Vilest mouths puff bold
In Sinon's service. You must wax your way
To th' Council——

Bia. Nay, no bending there!

Cre. But——

Bia. Peace!
Here's Stesilaus! He's most heavy shipped.
What is aboard? And now comes Pelagon,
With 's threshing-tongue a-ready. Chaff will fly.
[*Enter Pelagon, upper left*]

Pel. What thinkst of Phania? Is she not a chick?

Ste. You've tricked me, Pelagon! What fubbery
Have you put on me?

Pel. Sir? Now, now! Why, friend!

Ste. That's not my daughter!

Bia. [*Drawing Creon back*] Whist!

Ste. I'll see my own!
My Phania! Not that bib,—that mewling piece,
With th' milk still in her mouth!

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Pel. Speak so of her?
A bud in th' dew! A cherry next its leaf!
A pippin on the limb!
Ste. Not mine, I say!
Pel. If you repent you did beget her, sir,
I'll be your shift and own the curtained deed
'Fore man and Heaven.
Ste. That my child?
Pel. Yours, friend.
Ste. Would she had never left Archippe's lap
For Sachinessa's! Patience, cool my tongue!
But I've done better by your Pyrrha!
Pel. Soft,
Beseech you, Stesilaus! Here's no place
For trumpeting our secret. And brief time
Forbids it present voice. The hour is on
To hear the people's answer. Come, my lord.
Your comrades go before you. We're past late.
Ste. Friend Pelagon, though courtesy be pressed
To th' kibe, I'll urge you keep at home. 'Tis best
You be not seen in this. The lords, who know
You lean to Sparta,—and for that all thanks,—
Are pricked therewith to oppose us, when they else
Might voice us favor.
Pel. Ay, they know me, friend.
My eye sets them at guard. They feel it, sir!
Puts them on screw. Well, so,—I'll stay behind.
But let me set you forth. [*Exeunt, upper right*]
Bia. Is 't trick, or truth?
Cre. Touch me! A needle's point
Could find no spot amazement hath not taken!
Bia. Didst hear it Creon? Pyrrha an Athenian!
O, words of miracle, if ye be true,—
Friend, friend, I'm in a whirl upon a way

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To use this strange unearthment for the good
Of Athens. You'll be silent, Creon?
Cre. Nay,
I think——
Bia. And now I've lost fair Phania!
Cre. Lost?
Bia. With Mars i' the dusk of this debated time,
The Athenian general may not wive himself
With Sparta.
Cre. True!
Bia. I might give up command,
And be no more my country's armored watch. . . . .
Nay, Attica is first! That's sworn. I'll plunge
The sacrificial knife deep as my love.
And now 'tis done. Ah, Creon, tend thee well
My gentle loss.
Cre. This sets thee o'er thyself!
O noblest bounty that in grace compeers
With emulous Heaven! What in me can pay——
Bia. No more of 't now. But what a secret this!
If 't solely were my own—
Cre. It is, my lord!
'Tis yours. I have no speech, no tongue for 't!
Bia. Thanks,
My Creon, thanks! And will you go once more
To th' street, where now it seems I have some need
Of loyal ears?
Cre. I serve you, Biades. [*Exit, upper right*]
Bia. Fast hooked, and feels no barb. If he'll lie dark
Till I would stir the waters. . . . . Is it truth?
Pyrrha! Athenian born and Spartan bred!
By Mars and Eros! Here's a captain's bride!
There's flutter in me like a forest shook
With waking birds!
[*Re-enter Phania, still weeping*]

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Bia. Why, Phania! Such a shower,
My kitkin!
Pha. Stesilaus sh-shook me so!
Called me a sque-e-aking pewit!
Bia. Ha! He did?
Well, listen to me, Phania. Come, look up.
[*Lifts her chin*]
A maid with little eyes should never weep.
Leave that to Juno orbs. They swim in sorrow
Like full moons in a lake, but beads like yours
Are only bright when dry. Shun grief as you
Shun mud. [*Exit, middle left*]
Pha. [*Gasping*] Why—Biades—he's gone!
He said——
Oh, oh! If I could die——
[*Sobs with abandon. Enter Alcanor, upper left. He pauses before her. She looks up bewildered*]
Alc. Ah, gentle star,
What shrouds thee in this rain? Yet thou'rt not hid.
Thy beauty shining on these clouds of pearl
Makes every drop that dies reflecting thee
A little, falling sun.
Pha. Oh, Biades said——
He said—he said——
Alc. If what he said so troubles,
Let me unsay it with a kiss that makes
Trouble forgot and dumb. [*Kisses her*]
Pha. [*On his bosom*] I'm not—I'm not—
Not *ugly*, sir?
Alc. O, dove of Aphrodite!
Earth stores her beauty in this single face,
That she may show one jewel to the skies
When gods boast they have all!
[*Phania purrs comfortedly, then releases herself*]

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Pha. How dare you, sir,
Attack me? Who are you?
Alc. I do not know.
Pha. Not know?
Alc. Nothing of self or where I am.
It may be those are trees on giant guard,
And these bright peeping things are flowers' eyes,
And this is happy grass we stand upon,
And that blue watcher is the faithful sky,
But I know naught except my soul is yours,
O, maid-magician, in whose snare I lie
Kissing the net that binds me! [*Kissing her fallen curls*]
Pha. But you know
Your name!
Alc. Not in this world a minute old
That now I find me in, but in time past
I was Alcanor, Stesilaus' son.
Pha. O!—then—why—all is well! You're noble, sir!
My father will approve you.
Alc. Hast a father?
And art not magic-born? Then I perceive
I must go back and find my earthly wits.
Pha. Nay, he is Pelagon, your father's friend.
Alc. You're Phania, then!
Pha. [*Giving her hand*] I am.
Alc. No more than this?
No kiss?
Pha. [*Very shy*] You've had it, sir.
Alc. A phantom one!
'Twas in a dream, as two ghost-lovers meet
On an Elysian path. Too cold for earth!
Pha. [*Touching her cheek*] Nay, it is warm here yet.
[*He takes her in his arms, and they withdraw lower right. Pelagon enters, upper right, in time to witness the embrace*]

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Pel. [*Rousing from his horror*] Her brother! Gods!
Whip me all hagglers! We have stood so long
At door of our confession that this shame
Gets by us. Phania and Alcanor! Oh!
No shuffling now! When Stesilaus comes,
The tale must out!

[*Enter Pyrrha, middle left. She crosses, passing Pelagon, who retreats rear, unseen by her. She loiters right*]

Pel. Here's opportunity
At beck. I'll follow. [*Advances*] Ahem! My daughter,——
Pyrr. Sir?
You seek your daughter? I will look this way.
[*Goes farther right*]

Pel. I must advance, and take her Spartan guard
With gentleness. My love, 'tis you I seek.

Pyrr. [*Stiffly*] You'd speak to me?

Pel. My little Pyrrha,——
Pyrr. Little!

Pel. I think of Phania. In my heart you both
Hold undivided place. Shall we not chat a bit,
My Pyrrha?

Pyrr. Kitchen maids do that, not men
Of State.

Pel. Nay, there's a time when one may cast
The civic garment and take household ease
In modest robe.

Pyrr. [*Aside*] A swaddling band would fit him!

Pel. You will not hear me?

Pyrr. I wait upon you, sir.
For if your hostship I forget, and leave
The fees of grace unpaid, I yet must know
You are my father's friend. Say what you will,
My lord.

Pel. That word undears me! Let your tongue
Breach colder custom and give me a name

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That brings me near in love as Stesilaus.
Wilt call me father, Pyrrha?

Pyrr. [*Retreating*] You, my lord?

Pel. They've frozen her, poor child! Must blow more warm.
Indeed a father. Call me what I am,
For so I love you, Pyrrha.

Pyrr. Is it thus
The Athens sages talk?

Pel. Ay, we're not cut
Of ice as Spartans are. Here your poor heart
Shall know what sun is, and the Springs you've lost,
Betrayed without a bloom in frigid Sparta,
In Athens shall blow fair. You are amazed,
My sweet, but by this kiss——

Pyrr. [*Giving him a blow*] You goose-eyed goat!
I strike not at your years, Lord Pelagon,
But at your mind which has not come of age
And gives me elder right.

[*Exit, middle left. While Pelagon is recovering, enter Stesilaus, upper right*]

Pel. [*Welcoming the interruption*] You, Stesilaus?
So soon, friend, from the Assembly?

Ste. Late, sir, late!
More haste had been more prudence.

Pel. Why, why, why!

Ste. Where is your buttery nephew, Biades?
Who slips to the seat of question and melts all
Into one potch of folly!

Pel. But I'd know——

Ste. Why I am here, not there? A crater mouth
That calls itself a people hissed eruption
Into my face, and without bow I set
My back to 't, sir!

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Pel. Blame me for all! I knew
I should not stay behind! The gods do know
I am the voice of Athens. 'Tis no pride
That speaks bare truth. I'll go——
Ste. Tuh, tuh!
A word with Biades——
Pel. But not too sharp,
My friend. He is of weight——
Ste. No sharper than
My stick! Then I set out for Sparta, where
The very ground knows Stesilaus walks!
Pel. And Phania goes with you?
Ste. Not if the chit
May corner in your kitchen! She's worth that.
Pel. You'll leave her here?
Ste. It will content me. I'll
Surrender both.
Pel. What? Both! Nay, your free heart
Shall not outdo my own.
Ste. You'll give me Pyrrha?
Pel. Friend of my soul, I will!
Ste. [*Moved*] Thanks, Pelagon.
She's dearer than my son. More like my blood.
Alcanor is too soft and woman-lipped.
Too much Archippe in him from his birth,
Nor blows could drive it out.
Pel. And mine own eyes
Have seen a cooing match between himself
And Phania.
Ste. Zeus! His sister!
Pel. While we speak,
The fated pair are yonder——
Ste. I'll get him home!
And leave the witch to you! Had I a doubt

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To hold me back, this turn would be
Decision's point. She must stay here.
Pel. But how
Make answer to our wives? Our wisdom's nicked
Where it is tenderest if we confess.
Ste. What's to confess? I know my will and do it.
Pel. Ay, ay, you bear your wife in a sack, but mine
Is on her feet and goes her pace. Look yon!
They come together! A brace, and one of them
Would tie my tongue.
Ste. Tie water in a brook!
[*Archippe and Sachinessa enter upper right*]
Sac. We do not come to shame you; noble lords
And husbands, though we've that to bear which put
To honest ballad would uncrest your pride
And clip a reef or two from the tall sail
Of dignity.
Ste. Why, madam, this approach?
Sac. I walk, sir, in my garden when I please.
Arc. We have a suit, my honored lords, which you
May think full strange, remembering our prayers
Of twenty years ago.
Ste. What suit canst have?
If you must try the goose-step out of doors,
Go thank the gods for suiting you with me,
Who save you from all suit by hearing none.
Sac. Not hear us, sir? I'll catch you by the ears
And shake the pride-wool out, but you shall hear!
Suited with you! And then go thank the gods!
Pel. Why, Sachinessa, love! What you, duck?
Sac. This, Pelagon. When in that sad year gone
You took my child from me——
Pel. What? That again?
Sac. Not that, but this. I did not stay you then,
Being young in wedlock and my wit at cheep

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In its first feathers. But this second time
When you lift up your hand to cut the bough
Whose root is in my heart, I'll speak so loud
That if your dull ear miss, I'll reach you yet
By way o' the stars that will cry back my wrong
When they so hear it.

Pel. You would beg for Phania?

Sac. I would. There is no source of love so great
As brooding care. That makes the mother, not
The childing pangs. Though she, from the first hour,
Will cherish what she must so dearly buy,
'Tis day by watchful day her swelling love
Is born. So I, as new days past, forgot
The child of my brief pain, and gave to one
That nestled in her place my care-born love.
Now you would strike again——

Pel. Sweet, by my soul,—
Nay, Sachinessa, dearest heart, be calm.
Your words have never in our mated life
Moved me as now. If Stesilaus yields,
And his stern will be broken by your plea,
I am content.

Ste. I'm so far moved, my friend,
That I will hear Archippe speak her wish.
Her love for Pyrrha will not match with that
Your wife bestows on Phania.

Arc. Ay, my lord,
I've never loved the stranger as my own,
But she is dearer than my own grown strange.
I see in Phania all my tender loss,
But it is lost forever. Give me, Pyrrha.
I have no other daughter.

Ste. Keep her, dame.
But make this weakness not your heckling ground
Where you would spar for favors. No more suits!

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Pel. And, Sachinessa, hear the same from me.
Sac. You borrow feathers and I'll twitch 'em out!
Ste. [*To Archippe*] Lest you should badger, footed safe on this,
Know that my judgment's not earwigged by you
To this repeal, but now configures pat
To the act itself, that keeps a constant step
With our first purpose. Our intent comes out
With even edges, though reversed in face.
An Athens' maid shall be a Spartan mother,
And here shall dwell a dame of Spartan blood.
Pel. You hear it, Sachinessa. I'm not one
To throw my pack away in sight of home.
Come mud, come mire, I bear my judgment out,
As Athens knows.
Sac. I'll swear to it there's no man
I' the city better hides the sun with a sieve!
Ste. And secondly, my dame, know that I've won
My high contention that the laws of Sparta
Are best for breeding earth a godlike race.
For here my proof enroots in warmest life
That they can aggrandize the chalky veins
Of pampered Attica to ducts that bear
The red, unconquered sap of Lacedæmon.
Sac. So Pyrrha is your proof!
Ste. No question there.
A weak, Athenian babe grows up the pride
Of Sparta, while a budling of her own,
Nursled by Athens' soft and careless shift,
Scarce grows to woman's level——
Sac. Why, you puffed——
You pride-blown——
Arc. Come with me!
Sac. But such a bladder!
He'd top a flood into the second world
And wet but half his skin!

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Arc. Nay, Sachinessa,
Our suit is won. No words! We'll haste once more
To Philon's shrine. For this dear joy I'll bend
A willing knee. Come, come!
[*Draws her away, upper right*]
Pel. [*Capering*] Could reel it now
Like school-boy 'scaped a whipping!
Ste. Shame! Your years
Will blush. [*Goes left*] Now Biades, and then farewell!
Pel. Ah, there's my mourning cloak! I'll go at once
To th' Council, and——
Ste. Vain labor, Pelagon.
Pel. Nay, I will stir them!
[*Exit, upper right. Biades enters left. He is arrayed in a purple gown with long train held up by his monkey. A peacock fan swings from a girdle, and jewels dangle from his ears. He carries a scroll from which he reads as he walks, tittering over the matter. Stesilaus watches him curiously, then amazedly recognizes him*]
Ste. Biades! Is 't he?
May eyes report it to a brain unshaken?
. . . . Ho, sir,—or madam?
Bia. Did you speak, my lord?
Your pardon! I was buried here,—quite drowned
I' the honey of this tale. Sir, it suggests,—
But that's not it,—the style, so quaint, so pure,—
It plays with thoughts and leaves them bright as shells
The sea has polished to their curling edges.
You'll hear this line? 'Tis worth a pause. Eh, not?
You've never wooed the script? Ah, I forget.
War is the art of Sparta.
Ste. Are you man?
Bia. What's that to an artist, sir? Life in me packs
The germinal grain of all, and what may come
To birth and bloom, I leave to nursing Fate.
But you seem ruffled,—warm. Pray have my fan.

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Then take my parchment,—sit you in this nook
And read of Corys and his water-nymph
Until the charm of an unhurrying world
Steals wave-like round you.
Ste. Olympus! Was 't this voice
That tripped my reason? Led my cautious years
To take instruction from a dizzened ape
And lose the cause they guarded? Was 't myself
So slubbered judgment——
Bia. Ah, must I believe
You honored my good counsel?
Ste. Good!
Bia. 'Twas good
For Athens. Ha, you slipped into the noose
As easily as my finger takes this ring.
A wondrous sapphire here. You know the stone?
This is from Egypt,—has the desert fire
'Neath Nilus' liquid smile. Is 't not a treasure?
But I forget. Your Sparta has no gems.
By Hera's belt, your country goes too bare
For this adornèd earth!
Ste. Come, Biades!
Throw off that gown, and with a captain's sword
Deny this folly!
Bia. Friend, 'tis not my hour
For exercise. Our moods, I see, would quarrel.
But here's my thornless world. You'll pardon me.
[*Resumes walking and reading as before. Pyrrha enters, middle left, and stands watching him. He looks up and is struck motionless to find her eyes upon him. She comes nearer for a detached scrutiny, then crosses right*]
Ste. Find me Alcanor, daughter. And this hour
We leave for Sparta.
Pyrr. I am ready, sir.
[*Exit, lower right. Stesilaus goes into house, upper left*]

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Bia. She has good eyes, and used them. Overshot,
By Hermes! I must follow,—'twixt this fool
And meditation's eye must interpose
My soldier self!

[*Tears off robe, under which he wears a simple, belted tunic, flings jewels from his ears, and drives out Bico. Goes off, lower right. Enter Pelagon, much ruffled, from street*]

Pel. Where's Stesilaus? Stesilaus, ho!
Find Stesilaus!

[*Stesilaus returns, upper left*]

O, my friend, they're mad,
And you must fly! I never was so battered!
The senators cry out you played with them
As though their stationed honors were a row
Of last year's weanlings,—first to say you bore
Full power to treat, then at their open answer
To cover and prefer the opposite,
Declaring that their noble terms must cool
On th' road to Sparta! As I speak your comrades
Are driven through the gates. You must not stay.
They'll have your life, they are so worked. Come, come!
I know a way—I'll get you through——

Ste. I'll go
The way I came.

Pel. Nay, nay, I'll slip you out!
Leave here your wife and daughter. In gentler hour
I'll send them after, with your son,—

Ste. I'll speak
To Pyrrha——

Pel. No! This way! The world's at somersault!
The turtle's on his back, his claws to Heaven!
No one would hear me! *Me!* The voice of Athens!
And jeered me down, for I was Biades' kin,—

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Though why the wind sits so I know not!
Come—come—I was so battered——
[*Exeunt, upper left. Pyrrha and Biades enter, lower right*]
Bia. But one word!
Pyrr. I've let you shower words in hope to drain
Your breath of them, but they grow to a hail.
Pelt me no more, Athenian.
Bia. O, that name
I held my pearl of honor is become
A wounding thorn! I'll wear 't no more.
Pyrr. You'll be
A Spartan?
Bia. Ay, if you are one!
Pyrr. So vows
An Athens' captain.
Bia. Nay, I have no place,
No rank, no office, duty or pursuit,
But this my gage is in. Nor rest till I have won!
Pyrr. Then you'll die weary, sir. So long 'twill take
To make me yours.
Bia. If you will love my shade
I'll on the instant make myself a ghost!
Pyrr. Love's burning deeds do ever lie before him.
He ne'er gets past to make them history.
Bia. O, hear my oath! Thy birthland shall be mine!
Pyrr. Whist, Biades! The gods might hear you too.
Bia. I'll swear it in the ears of Zeus!
Pyrr. By what
Irreverenced deity wilt break it?
Bia. Ah,
By none, fair Pyrrha! I'll stake my golden part
In love's eternity, no land's more dear
To my own heart than that which gave you birth.
Pyrr. Ay, for on Spartan soil the laurel grows

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Which you would pluck from drenched defeat and set
Among your bays. So dear as that!
[*A clamor is heard in street*]
Bia. I'll woo
In better time. Till then let this pure gem
Speak for me on your breast. 'Tis like my love,
No sudden thing. For as this captive fire
Dreamed in the heart of earth and could not wake
Till beauty born in man sent down his kiss,
So lay my love in Life from her first breath,
Deep as unconsciousness, till at your step
It knew itself. You scorn the half-hour flame,
But in your coming like an instant dawn
Find all its brevity. Ay, Pyrrha, sweet!
And let my token lie, a patient prayer,
Upon your bosom. Heaven should have its sun!
[*Drops the locket into the folds of her dress. She casts it to the ground*]
Pyrr. Athens is such a sun, and Sparta as my foot
Shall overcloud it! [*Exit, middle left*]
Bia. Had she crushed my gem
To bleeding dust, I'd pay it o'er to see
Such flame unsheathe. Bright Eos necklaced with
A darkling east could not more beauteously
Threat earth with storm. [*Takes up the locket*]
You'll wear it yet, my terror,
Or I'll cut out the tongue that can not wag
To a woman's heart.
[*Enter Creon from street*]
What, Creon? Dumb with news?
Which I will guess before your tongue's uncrimped.
We've lost our gentle guests? Our Spartan friends
Are off?
Cre. They're driven out. But that is old.
Atop that tale, like mountain on a hump,
Comes one will wake you, sir! The tumbling streams

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That bore the Spartans out, rage back again,
A gathered flood against you,—you, my lord!
Bia. Ah!
Cre. Sinon's poison spreads till men
That yesterday lay down before you, now
Cry for your death. I warned you, friend!
Bia. You did.
Be happy then. Your duty's done.
Cre. Oh, sir,
Your house is sacked, and all your golden plate,
Parcelled on robber backs, is carried out
And spots the city with a hundred suns!
Bia. There's more i' the world. Let that not trouble you.
Cre. Your robes are in the street, and carters' wheels
Grow royal with them!
Bia. Well, there yet are looms.
While weavers know their art this is no loss.
Cre. Your pictures——
Bia. What? If they've one finger laid
On those immortal treasures——
Cre. All are riddled!
Bia. All, Creon? Not my Zeuxis? No! The stones
Hurled at it would have paused as though a god
Were hidden there!
Cre. All, friend.
Bia. Ay, these are tears.
But I will chide them and think on my sword.
Now I must bend me to the senators,—
Get leave to call my troops,—
[*Enter a body of senators, Amentor at their head*]
Most noble lords,
I was about to seek you.
Amen. Shifts your mood,
Proud Biades? The answer's not yet cold

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That came so hot from you,—a two-edged shame
That struck into your honor as our own!
Bia. Nay, gentle senators, Athenian fathers!
That you could note so low, so foul a charge
As secret Sinon brought against my name,
Gave me the block, the bellows, and the fire
Wherewith I forged my answer,—one that kept
My honor whole, and if your own needs surgery,
Lay 't not to me, but let good sense mend all,
And give me leave to go against this mob
Now scarring Athens' beauty.
Amen. Go alone.
Bia. I have an army.
Amen. Ask Lord Sinon that.
Bia. When fishes drown!
Amen. Put out your single arm,
And feel your army in it. Athens' troops
Are now in Sinon's charge. You are no more
Her general. You are banished.
Bia. Is this so?
Senators. It is.
Bia. Then I am dumb. Words on your heat
Would fall as snow,—and I am not a man
To let my scars speak, though my body bears
Enough to cry you shame.
Amen. We know your valor,
But with it goes a pride no State could bear
But that it must. Make your escape, my lord.
The people pressed us, and we save your life
By this decree.
Bia. O, Athens that did love me!
Amen. And now repents that love, for know you, sir,
Though men may be irreverent as they choose,
They'll follow only who revere their gods.
[*Exeunt senators*]

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Cre. But you were meek!
Bia. If I had let them know
I've yet a tongue, they might have had that too,
And in the courts where I must sue for love
'Twill be my royal member,—all my suite
And kingly plenitude.
Cre. They will repent.
Bia. On knees, sir! Banished! O, my heart could lend
Hot Sirius fire!
Cre. You! Banished!
Bia. Nay, while sense
From wit and speech are undivorced, and courage
Knits them in purpose drinking up the seas
That distance me from Athens, who shall say
I'm banished? Bribe mankind and nature too,
Ye bleary senators! Suborn the winds!
Put me at end of farthest watery leagues!
While there's no rift between me and my gods,
I'll shake this night as from Apollo's brow
And show my day emergent!
Cre. Where wilt go?
Bia. To Persia first, where I am dear to Phernes.
And then, perchance, with Persia at my back,
Sparta may find me fair, though now I'm black
As Pluto's poker. We'll not flag, my heart,
Till every fleet o' the world rides here and makes
This saucy harbor tremble! What an ague then
Shall shake thee, Athens, thinking on this hour!

[*Curtain*]

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ACT III

SCENE: *The assembly ground of the Spartans. Maidens discovered. A dance is ending.*

Nac. We limped through that. Apollo! Are there thorns
I' the grass? We'll better it. Come!
Dia. No time. I hear
The senators.
Nac. They wait beyond the bridge
For old Aristogeiton. Come, my maids!
You, Dianessa need to school your toes.
'Twas you played wild-foot—twice!
Art. Save her a slip
When Agis' eye is on her!
Nac. Faith, she'd be
No bride this year!
Dia. What ache for that? His love
Is slight if 't hangs upon my toes.
Nac. My troth!
Less might catch more!
Dia. You, Nacia, are not so lithe
As a ferret in a hoop. An Athens maid
Might labor so in all her skirts.
Nac. Ho, ho!
A little puff blow such a fire? The coals
Were hot then!
Myr. Nay, my girls, we'll douse you both
I' the river yonder if you flame at naught.

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How, Dianessa, dance the maids of Athens?
But surely not in skirts!
Dia. My father saw them,
And so he said.
Myr. Why dance at all then? Grace
That cadent girdles the invisible waves
Of flute and harp is born of faining limbs,
And hide them who may see it?
The. No doubt they bob
Like bears in blankets, and believe they dance.
Nac. Pyrrha could say. But since she came from Athens
Who hears her speak?
Art. She keeps from all our games,
And scorns the wrestle, though our noblest youths
Have sent her challenge.
The. Ay! Lets Dianessa wear
The vestal bays, nor cares if Hieron
Be there to see.
Myr. Come, Pyrrha, tell us how
The Athenian maidens dance with shrouded feet.
Pyrr. They wear their robes as Morning does the mist
That makes her beauty greater and her dream
Live on in men.
Dia. Ah, maidens, here's a tale
For the other ear.
Pyrr. The bare and brazen sun
That's up without a cloud, cheers to the hunt,
The fight, the bruited path,—makes careful dames
Send linen to the ford, and say "Zeus grant,
We'll air the beds!"
Nac. Ay, wives must know their season.
Pyrr. But let night-swimming Morn come up
In foamy veil, and her priest-hearted rose

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Stays lusty feet and gives adventure's hour
To the achieving soul.
Art. What kin is this
To th' matter?
Pyrr. Why, Artante, when we dance
Half naked as we do before the youths,
They say of us "A bed-mate there, and strong
To bear and breed brave warriors for my house."
But they in Athens who so watch the dance,
See sheatheless Being shine through form that would,
Not softened thus, first fill the ruder eye
And leave unseen the token of a grace
Earth may not shadow.
Dia. Nay, you speak Athenian!
Let's have it in our tongue.
Nac. What grace can be
So badgered in a gown?
Pyrr. Ask flying doves,
That rhythm the air till it doth ache with loss
When they have passed. So have these maidens taught
The silken fold to be their wingèd part.
Myr. Ask her no more. Alack, our Pyrrha drank
Of charmed Ilissus,—must go back to Athens!
Nac. But come! Our dance! We yet are Spartan maids.
Dia. [*Taking wreath from her hair*] Our flowers are far from morning. See, these buds
Are pale as they had never known the dew.
But I know where some fleecy clusters blow
And daintily edge the stream. Like tiny birds,
Green-necked and lily-winged, they are alight
A hundred to a stem. I'll have a wreath
Of them.
Myr. And I. These sad things are less bright
Than locks they should adorn.

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Art. New garlands, all!
Where grow these favors? Dianessa, lead!

[*They go off, rear left. Pyrrha waits a meditative moment, then turns to follow. A bough brushes her cheek. She puts up her hand and plucks a bunch of berries from it*]

Pyrr. 'Tis like his ruby. Nature loved them both
With the same kiss,—the berry and the stone.

[*Fastens cluster to her bosom*]

"Heaven should have its sun." This sun will fade,
But that I threw away had ne'er lost hue
So near my heart, giving and taking fire.

[*Something thrown from the bushes falls at her feet. She gazes at it, not taking it up*]

Ah! Biades' jewel! Who . . . . . [*Looks about guardedly*]

[*Biades comes from the woods. He is dressed as a Helot in a scant tunic of goat-skin, and wears a large cap*]

Pyrr. Whose slave are you,
Bold Helot?

Bia. [*Kneeling*] Thine! [*Takes off cap, revealing his quantity of dark curls*]

Pyrr. Are you in love with death,
That you have come to Sparta?

Bia. Nay, I come
A banished man.

Pyrr. I've heard how you were plucked.

Bia. No feather left.

Pyrr. Life, sir, is yours, and you
Cast it away in Lacedæmon.

Bia. Nay,—

Pyrr. You whose dark outrage made her honor bleed,
Think on her burning wound to set the foot
Of impudence and live?

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Bia. I know the Spartans.
They will exalt my courage above death.
Pyrr. Courage that reckons so bates its own worth
Till a coward might disport it. You will meet
Death's mercy but no other.
Bia. No, the virtue
Dearest in them they'll hold dear in myself.
But if not so,—blow out your candle, Fate,
I'll go to bed.
Pyrr. Why not have fled to Persia?
She's softer mannered,—has no aching pride
Your death would poultice.
Bia. Pyrrha lives in Sparta.
Howe'er I set my feet, love turned them here.
Which way I bent some tingèd thought of thee
Crept as a secret sun to every sense
And made the hidden threads of being blush
Like coral boughs when Aphrodite's foot
Is on the wave.
Pyrr. Athenian, what canst hope
From Stesilaus' daughter?
Bia. I ask naught.
But had a gem of hers that hourly cried
To clasp its mistress, and to bring it thus,
With Death a looker-on, I thought might make
The peasant service shine so sovranly
That even her royal and offended eyes
Might gently entertain it.
Pyrr. Deck the bark
Of yon shag ilex and 'twill wear your trinket
With the same grace and thanks.
Bia. Thy grace is hers
Who walked unrobed from hands of the high gods
Grown jealous of the beauty they had made.
Not this, nor any jewel may adorn it,

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Though swartest pebbles might grow ruby proud,
And rubies throb with breath to be so worn.
And for thy thanks, I have not come this way
To ask for them. Keep them for one so poor
He lets his heart for hire.

[*Puts locket slowly under his tunic*]

And yet my ears
Fed on a sigh when I was hidden there.

Pyrr. Who is so strong as never to have sighed?
That secret moment was my weakest too.
I'm now a Spartan, and my father's name
Is Stesilaus. You may know it, sir,
Who wert of Athens, but whose country now
Is so much ground as you may beg of foes,
And that, Zeus help, they'll measure without grudge.
You're not so tall your grave would scant a field,
Or make a garden less.

[*Sounds of approach across bridge, lower right*]

Bia. Does Fate come noisy-footed?
I thought she crept, and loved the jungle-leap.

Pyrr. Hide, sir! I'll be as secret as these shrubs,
And not reveal you sooner. With the night
You may steal out of Sparta.

Bia. I'll go out winged
With Spartan ships, and honor as a bride
Shall sail with me!

Pyrr. Are you so mad? Then die!

[*Enter ephors and senators, all old men, followed by warriors, then youths, wives, maidens, children, and attendant slaves. Biades draws his cap down and lies slouching on the grass. The ephors and senators take seats which the Helots have prepared for them*]

First Ephor. What! Must we wait? Where are these merry slips?

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First Senator. The woods are dancing yonder. By that sign
They come.

[*Re-enter Dianessa, Myrta, and companions, who dance before the assembly, the figure symbolizing the capture of Persephone. They continue dancing, the youths joining, until every maid has won a partner.*

Ste. [*To Archippe*] Our Pyrrha does not dance.
Why's that?

Arc. No why at all. I'll rate her. Sulky chuff!

Ste. Ay, you'll be on her heels!

Arc. The younger maids
Are chosen. She'll be left. There's Hieron
With eyes like begging moons which way she goes,
But she draws off,—

Ste. Well, well! She'll please herself.

Arc. In Phania, I'd have had a daughter now——

Ste. What, madam? Gabble here? Be done!

Agis. [*Among the young men*] I thirst.
[*To Biades*] Up, slave! Fill me a cup. Come, move, you drone!

[*Biades slowly rises and goes to spring under trees, rear*]

A Young Lord. What Helot's that?

Another. Some dog o' the farms. A staff
On 's back might help his legs.

Another. I'll put mine to 't.

[*Biades lazily returns with cup. In handing it to Agis he spills part of the contents*]

Agis. [*Emptying the cup in Biades' face*]
By Dis and Rhadamanthus! Sot! Whose man
Is this?

Bia. My own, you Spartan whelp!

[*Gives Agis a blow, so unexpected that it knocks him down. His head strikes the root of a tree and he does not rise. A number of Spartans rush upon Biades. Others bear Agis off, left*]

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Voices. The dog!
Tread him to earth! Down! down!
Bia. [*Springing from them and taking off his cap*]
What, Greeks? You'd kill
A brother?
A Voice. Biades!
Bia. My friends——
Voices. Ha, ha! His friends!
Lys. What friending was 't you gave us on the day
You drove us out of Athens? Hoot and club
Then spoke how dear you loved us. We had not
Brought off our lives if your desire had dared
Blow full on Athens' heat.
Gir. Brought off our lives?
Where's Heracordus? Stoned at Athens' gate,
And dead upon the road.
Bia. Nay, brothers——
Gir. Ha!
If you're a brother, weep beside his grave.
I'll show it you.
Lys. And all the graves where lie
The dead we brought two bleeding years ago
From Decalea's wall, where you gave entry
Then broke the truce with charge!
Bia. But hear, my lords——
Gir. Come, wail beside them till they wake and ask
What new calamity brews in your tears!
[*Enter Lenon*]
Len. Agis yet swoons. That root was edged with death.
We fear he's gone.
Gir. For this alone, Athenian,
You should not live,—though all your else-wrought deeds
Were mercy's pawn for you.
Bia. Ye fathers, hear!
If ye know Justice,—and the world has said

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Her lovers dwell in Sparta,—shall he cry
To scorn-shut ears, whose injuries taking voice
Should pass in thunder where your virtues sleep?
Hear one whose wrongs have bruised him to your coast,
And let it not be said that you from safe
Unshaken rocks met suppliant hands with spears!
Ste. Ye noble elders, there's a sort of mercy
On which dishonor feeds. As pasty, soft
As butter in the sun, it chokes the sluice
Of reason,—in marshy obliteration lays
The marks and bounds of justice,—nauseous spreads
Till mind is left no throne. Let it not come
Where sit the guards of honor!
Bia. I grant you so.
But what I ask is not thus natured, sir!
Sages of Lacedæmon, there's a mercy
That veins the very rock of Justice' seat.
It is the agent of divinest mould
In all the world. By it the mind grows fair
With blossoms deity may gather. 'Tis
As precious to the soul as south-lipped winds
To the winter-aching earth. Go bare of it,
Though ye know Virtue ye wear not her pearl.
I beg my life that you in saving me
May save the heavenliest favor given to men,
Nor crush it out of Sparta, leaving her
The scarred and barren terror gods forsake.
Second Ephor. Shall hear his plea? He may have argument
Of worthy note.
Second Senator. 'Tis not our way to judge
The dumb.
Third Ephor. [*Very old, creakingly*]
Why, if a lion, boar, or pard,

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Or any beast, should pause as we did burn
In chase, and beg us hear his cause, I think
Our ears would ope.
Ste. Ay, and the earth too, sir,
Bearing such wonder on it! Folly's self
Would be too wise to listen to this man,
Yet ye would hear him!
Fourth Ephor. More than would. We will.
Bia. This clemency shows like yourselves,—the gem
Of mind's adornment, as ye are the lustre
Of Sparta's matchless race!
Ste. Now he is off.
Will gallop with us to what ditch he choose.
First Senator. Speak, Biades.
Bia. Of Agis then, my lords,—
This newly raw offence,—be my first word.
And I'll not stay for garnish. Truth is bare,
And bravest so. Though 'twas my Helot guise
Drew Agis' insult on me, think you, sirs,
It fell upon a proud and free-born Greek,
And who is here that could with putting on
A slave's vile dress put on his nature too,
Drain off his ancient, high nobility,
And in one brutish instant lose the blood
That made his fathers heroes? Is there one?
First Ephor. We grant you, none.
Bia. Your hearts then struck my blow,
Therefore must pardon it. If Agis' death
Falls from it, 'tis but accident that sleeps
In every motion, and in mine awoke
Untimely. Who, so shorn of wisdom, thinks
That I, a suitor here for barest life,
Meant him a vital stroke that would o'ercry
My prayers and make a mock of suppliance?
I'll mourn with you, my lords, but ask you wring

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The neck of Fate, and leave my head where 'tis
To praise the just of Sparta.
Third Senator. So we might
But for the heavier charges that engage
The sighs of mercy 'gainst you ere they blow
This deed a pardon. What of Decalea?
Bia. That was a ruse the Spartans taught me, sir,
When at Eleusis they ensnared my troops
Within the gates, and naught passed out again
Save rivers of their blood. If I must die
For Decalea, die you with me, men,
For red Eleusis.
Fourth Senator. This is justice too.
I saw Eleusis. He is clear on that.
Ste. I warn you, senators! The fleetest wit
That pauses on his guile is honey-mired
And ne'er gets farther.
First Ephor. We'll not keep his road
An inch past justice, but we'll go so far.
Ste. So you resolve, but Hecate at his smile
Would plod beside him like a market lass,
Forgetting vengeance.
Bia. Honored Stesilaus:——
Ste. Honored? Ay, Biades! With gibe and jeer
That shook the walls of Athens! By my staff,
I'll——
Bia. Noble fathers, hear me for yourselves,
Who, loved of Pallas, in this council sit
Her earthly heirs and nature's demigods!
This rage of Stesilaus is itself
Sanction and seal for my adoption here,
A son of Sparta.
Ste. Ha! Now he would drive
The mares of Diomed!
Bia. My lords,——

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Ste. Prove this?
Bia. Why made you Stesilaus head and tongue
Of envoy unto Athens? For you thought
His mind, most apt, fluidic, politic,
More quick than danger, would take shape of need,
Repairing your defense fast as you found
Your safety cramped. If I o'ercame him then
With wit that watched with sleepless spear at door
Of Athens' housèd trust, must you not crown in me
The quality held sovereign in him?
Ste. You hear, you elders,—must!
Bia. Ay, must,—and must!
Or at the fontal spring of justice break
Your cups and thirst. No alien dripple may
Content you then.
First Senator. We listen, Biades.
Bia. When swords of an uneven temper meet,
Who scorns the better proved? Nay, you do set
Your love upon it,—in your armory
Give it a burnished place. And I who crossed
With Stesilaus, for my triumph ask
To be of Sparta's armor.
Ste. Our dead shall answer!
Bia. They shall. For every heart my steel made cold,
Is proof how well I served my Athens,—proof
Of loyal heat with which I'll serve the State
That makes me hers! A true-bred Greek, outthrust
And homeless, seeks a foster-land, that he
May lift for her his sword, nor wasteful let
The chiefest virtue in him die unused
While his lost name no more climbs to the gods.
Second Senator. Would you ally with us 'gainst Attica?
Bia. I'm yours for that. By th' mother of the sea,
Her tears shall wash your feet!
Third Senator. What way wouldst take?

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Bia. The way to Phernes and the Persian fleet
Now boastful before Rhodes. Grant me a convoy,
I'll forge with Persia Lacedæmon's sword,
And cut the crest from Athens.
Fourth Senator. We have failed
With Phernes.
Bia. You'll not fail again. He's sworn
My friend.
First Senator. Our ships are few.
Bia. But Corinth holds
Her sea-wings spread for any need of yours.
Ste. Hear me, ye warriors! He will lead
Our force afar, then stir up neighbor foes
To scourge unarmored Sparta! Think that one,
Cradled in silk and fed on nectared drops——
Bia. There, sir, I'm bold to say you're off the road
Of truth. My nurse was of your people, brought
From sterner Sparta for my orphan rearing,
By my good uncle Pelagon,—a man
Ye know your friend. From her wise hands I took
Your doughty-nurturing bread, and broth black-brewed,
That drives the shade of fear from veins of men.
Ste. I've bread now in my wallet. Let us see
Your teeth in 't.
[*Takes out a piece of coarse, stale bread and offers it to Biades*]
Bia. Pardon, sir! I do not hunger.
A Helot shared with me.
Ste. 'Twill keep till you
Would sup. But you must try our broth, sir. Pulse
Is seething yonder. Youths, bring here a bowl.
We have a guest who'd call his childhood up
In good black brew. Hark, Lenon!
[*Whispers to Lenon, who goes off left*]

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Third Ephor. It is truth.
Amycla was your nurse. I know the year
That she was sent to Athens.
Bia. On her lap
I learned a love for Sparta that returned
In warrior days to blunt my assaulting sword
And wound me from your side. She taught me too
The lyric wafture that dead hero-lips
Send on undying,—songs your young men sing,
And old men flush to hear,—and as a youth
I longed to make my civil Athens street
Echo to Sparta with a brother's call.
Third Ephor. But I am moved.
Fourth Ephor. And I.
Ste. Art grown so old
You'll feed on pap again? Come, Biades,
A song Amycla taught you! One will prove
Your love remembers Sparta.
Bia. Sir, I'm not
Your zany.
Ste. But you'd make my country one,
To antic for you.
[*Re-enter Lenon with bowl of broth*]
Ste. Here's your portion, sir.
Amycla made no better. Will you drink?
[*Gives bowl to Biades, who regards the black mixture dubiously. All are silent, watching him. He looks at Pyrrha*]
Bia. [*To Pyrrha*] Is't poison?
Pyrr. [*Stolid*] It may be.
Bia. [*To Senators*] Your will 's in this?
First Senator. It is.
Bia. If this be pledge that binds me yours,
Fellow of board and field, I drink long life

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To our compact. But if death waits here,—to you,
O comrade shades, and our good fellowship!
[*Drinks. The Spartans applaud*]

Ste. You lean to him, and Sparta topples with you!

A Young Man. [*Entering*] Agis is up! He comes!
And bears no grudge
For a good Greek blow. Says you could give no less.
[*Enter Agis*]

Bia. High Zeus, I thank thee! Agis, thou dost live
To take my pardon and to give me thine!
[*They take hands*]

Ste. So soft?

Lys. Better than blows.

Ste. Ha! Like disease
He'll spread the woman till our eyes drop tears
Instead of fire. When Spartan eagles moult,
They'll go no farther than Athenian owls.

Lys. He's valiant.

Ste. There's no braver tongue.

Lys. And friend
To Phernes.

Ste. So he says.

Lys. Nay, that's well known.

Ste. My captain comrades, and ye aged fathers,
If ye had seen him strut, a vanity
As brainless as the monkey at his heels,
With woman velvets making slut of wealth
Trailing foul dust,—a peacock fan at 's cheek
Where a soldier's beard should grow, and bangled ears
Whose swinging jewels tickled a white neck
Soft as a harlot's pillow,—this at time
His city laid such honor on his head
As would have kept a brave man on his knees
For wisdom to uphold it,—had ye looked on this,

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Ye'd call the weakest maiden from her wheel
To lead our wars ere trust to Biades!
First Ephor. A picture this,—shakes faith.
Second Ephor. We trust too far.
Ste. Sirs, had ye seen what I but paint——
Bia. My lords,
I'll wrestle with the stoutest Spartan youth
That makes your wars most dreaded, and these limbs,
Now shrunk with fasting, wasted and forsook
By Fortune that once fed them as her own,
Will prove my right to captain Sparta's host!
Ste. Our women could undo you, girl of Athens!
Meet his bold brag with this. One of our maids
Shall throw him! Ay! Then he'll betake his shame
To any shade will hide it.
Hie. Sir, I sue
To lay this boast.
Agis. My prayer be first, my lords!
Voices. A lot! A lot!
Ste. Nay, sons, a fall from you
Would give him hope to pick his honor up
And steal again to favor. He will plead
That you, full-fed, met him in famished hour,
When Fate hung him with bruises leeching strength,
And gave you victory. Let my offer hold.
A maiden to him, and we'll hear no more
Of valorous Biades.
First Ephor. We are agreed.
Second Ephor. Who is our strongest maid?
Lys. We've six whose claims
Push equal. All in public game have won
The bow of Artemis.
First Ephor. We'll choose from these.
Bia. Olympus, shower me woes! I will not cringe,
So they be man's. But save me from a mock

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That makes misfortune past seem sweet as drops
From Hera's healing cup!

Dia. A mock? The gods
Have never honored you till now.

Myr. See these,
My bantling? Arms that made Kalides wear
A three months' bruise!

The. And these have locked the strength
Of Lenon in defeat!

Dia. Ask Mirador
If he liked well the sandy bed I gave him.

Nac. Bethink you now how you'll outcrow disgrace,
For you'll be short of breath when you've gone through
The brash I'll give you.

Dia. Then he'll show his reefed
And wattled skin, and say that want of bread
O'ercame him, not our valor.

Art. Look you, maids!
His hollow eyes do beg some pity of us.
We'll give him yet a chance, and mate him with
Our lame Coraina. She's near well again.
Will drop her crutch to be our champion.

Bia. Zeus,
Behold me patient! Furies, though I lack
Some vaunting flesh, the sharpest ill that on
My body ravins feeds a spirit that
Might meet with Heracles and give him need
Of both his arms!

Dia. Ha! Better! Maids, his tongue
Will fight yet!

Ste. Peace! The ephors choose
That Dianessa bear this honor off.
She threw strong Mirador, first of the youths,
Which puts her o'er the rest.

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First Ephor. We've else determined
That with the fall the Athenian forfeits life.
Bia. And if I win, my lords? Since life must pay
Defeat, should victory not solicit me
With counterpoisèd prize?
First Ephor. We shall accept you
Leader and comrade, and give escort fair
To bear your suit to Phernes.
Lys. More! The maid
Shall be your bride, and bind you son and brother
To Sparta's love.
Second Ephor. You, Stesilaus, assent?
Ste. Since without risk you may pursue your folly,
I'll not oppose you.
First Ephor. Dianessa, you
Abide our will?
Dia. And welcome it. 'Twill work
Like Mars in me, and make my arm
The gallows of his fame. The Athenian lady!
I'd choose a husband among men.
Bia. And I,
My generous, dear lords, would woo and win
Some mute and humble maid. I would not force
The noble Dianessa bend her head
To one unworthied by a hostile Fate.
First Ephor. Tut, sir! If Fortune's love returns with heat
That makes you conqueror, by that same sun
Her pride will melt, and you will find her meek
As gosling in your hand.
Second Ephor. 'Tis settled so.
Wear what you win.
Pyrr. [*Rising*] Ye reverend men, and you,
My noble father, may my suit reveal
My love to Sparta and your love to me,

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Which has not spoken in this act of yours
That overpeers me and gives up my due
To Dianessa.
First Ephor. Ha?
Pyrr. Though Mirador
Was forced below her, never in a bout
Has she ta'en honors from me, while I oft
Have left her down.
Second Ephor. Speak'st truly?
Pyrr. Hear herself
Avouch it.
Dia. Ay, you overmate me, but
The gap between us will not cast the match
To Biades. And I was chosen.
Fourth Ephor. Nay,
You must give place.
Pyrr. I've other reason, sir.
It is my dear, war-honored father lays
This match on Sparta, and my pride of house
Would bear his counsel through the act that sets
The sage's seal upon it.
First Ephor. A daughter, sir!
Ste. Bare duty might so speak.
Pyrr. This gives me warmth
My maiden comrades lack. By every vein
My father gave me, his time-laurelled brow
Shall never wear a garland less!
Second Ephor. Well sworn!
Pyrr. And for I saw——
Third Ephor. More reasons?
Pyrr. —the rude shame
The Athenian put upon the ambassadors,
And mine own eyes bore him in lowest semblance,
Demeaned from manhood, his dishonor wrapped
In purple cost that left it yet more naked,

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I swear he shall not honored lead our wars!
If our gray heroes fail us, we have dames
To choose from,—need not go to Athens!
First Ephor. This speaks! The victory's won where courage makes
Such stout provision.
Pyrr. If I fail, my lords,
Then gods are mongers and their favors sell,
Denying honest prayers.
Lys. Come, Biades.
Art ready?
Bia. Ay, long past!
First Ephor. Your places then.
Ste. Delay you! Biades, with modesty
Unlooked for, but most fit, you gave up claim
To Dianessa,——
Bia. Nay, 'twas but an offer
Whose bounty met refusal.
Ste. I'll accept it
In Pyrrha's name.
Bia. So prudent against loss?
This caution, sir, gives me a victor's heart.
Ste. Triumph is hers a certain thousand times,
And yours a dicer's once, slipped you between
Hiccough and snore of gods at shutting time.
But since that once will have a thousandth chance
To trouble me, I'll grant you free of Pyrrha.
Bia. Wait till 'tis begged. Lysander spoke with kind
And equal honor, which did soften me
To leave his daughter his. And others here
Have tendered me the gentle looks that breed
The answering benison till hearts of earth
Feel heaven's element. But you, whose hate
Should hiss from crawling shape, not upright man's,
Wake fires in me that eat through godly patience

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And sweep to battle. I'll endure no further.
Back with your taunts! And if 'twill make you sore
Where pride is daintiest, I'll your daughter wed
Because she is your daughter!
Ste. Bark, you puppy,
But you'll not carry it!
Bia. Were she featured foul
As snaked Medusa,—her brow a hanging night,—
Her figure hooped as age when chin and toes
Are neighbors,—and of speech so scaly, harsh
As Stesilaus,—I, with no more color
Or shade of reason than that you deny me,
Would make her bride. The ephors gave their word,
And what I win I'll wear!
First Ephor. We'll see you do.
Content you, Stesilaus. None will weep
To know your bluff soul matched. To place! To place!
[*They wrestle. Pyrrha loses. Silence, then applause for Biades*]
A Lord. My heart upheld him, for I know him brave.
Another. I saw his dripping sword on Theban plain
Cut through the knotted fray and make two fields
O' the combat.
Another. He can pray too, Delphi knows!
Another. But when his gallant prayers their action find
The gods themselves rage in them.
First Ephor. [*To Pyrrha*] Daughter, take
Fair thanks from us for brave support of Sparta,
And having lost, more thanks for giving her
Another soldier. Has defeat made soft
Your heart for swift espousal?
Bia. Let me woo
In slower way, good father. Tho' my boast
Rose high 'gainst Stesilaus' scorn, I'm not
Of heart so rash that I would lose her love

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By taking it. With Sparta's aid now mine,
I'll ask her choose a noble guard and sail
With me, that I, by time and fortune graced,
May win a double suit, herself and Persia.
First Ephor. We'll think of it. Our plans are still unthreshed.
Come with us, Biades.
[*Ephors, with senators and Biades, lead the way over bridge. All follow except Stesilaus and Pyrrha*]
Ste. How was 't he won?
And he was livid famine! Scurfed with weeks
Of beggary! While you—such arms had saved
Antiope from Theseus!
[*Pyrrha droops silent*]
Up, my daughter!
We'll make this fall our hope. You shall take sail
With Biades——
Pyrr. Gods hear me, no!
Ste. You will.
I know his aim. He will betray our force
To Athens,—pardon's price. Athenian ease
Is in his marrow like a siren sleep,
And all this hardy show is but to buy
His languors back. You'll watch within his ship,
With Hieron a second secret eye,
And when his treachery ripens, take command
And bring him bound to Sparta.
Pyrr. Be so near?
Sail in his ship?
Ste. Be near him as a wife.
Watch close. Lie in his thoughts, though not his bed.
And if he presses to the shrine of favor,
Here is my dagger. This will be your guard.
Let him meet death upon it,—and that death
Be honor's sanctuary. Come! My brow

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Must smooth submissive to the senators.
Clear too your face with summer policy.
Thus openly we'll hide. The State's turned fool,
And naught between her and perdition save
An old man and a girl! [*Exit*]

Pyrr. [*Gazing at dagger*] If this cold blade
Were seeking traitors 't might look in my heart.

[*Curtain*]

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ACT IV

SCENE: *On board a galley off Athens. An open door left of centre, rear, shows a moonlit sea. Cressets burning within. Pyrrha discovered, seated and fingering a dagger. A diminishing sound of dipping oars and rowers singing.*

God of the bold who ride
  With song o'er their dead
Whose unsown graves wait wide,
  The singers' bed,—
Poseidon, befriend, befriend,
And the good wind send!

The sirens are on their rocks;
  Like a piercèd moon
Weeping her gold, their locks
  To the waters run.
Poseidon, befriend, befriend,
And the good wind send!

Fleet are the foam-toothed hounds
  That hunt unfed,
With hunger that aches like wounds,
  And ships their bread.
Poseidon, befriend, befriend,
And the good wind send!

[*Enter Lysander*]

Pyrr. Lysander! You? Is 't battle?
Lys. At dawn we move
Upon the Athenian ships.

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Pyrr. They've come from harbor?
Lys. Nay, lurking still, fear-cabled to the land,
Like weanlings round a skirt.
Pyrr. At last a battle!
And Biades is true. The watch is done.
I'm sick of spying, hanging on him like
A doubt with teeth. He leaves this galley then?
Lys. Commands from the *Ino*, now so brave repaired
She sits her place as though the sea and air
Debated who should claim her, and she no more
Adorns both elements than herself 's adorned
By our young admiral.
Pyrr. He is gone? So soon?
Lys. Went, but is here again, and here must stay
These next three hours or more.
Pyrr. Why so, Lysander?
Lys. We sacrifice aboard Thrasyllus' ship,
Where now the captains gather, and the hand
Of one who leads the foe to his fathers' hearth
Would cloud the omen. He must keep apart.
Pyrr. You've told him that?
Lys. We have not dared.
Pyrr. Not dared?
Way, Spartan lions, for the Athenian puppy!
Lys. He's tender with his honor.
Pyrr. His honor!
Lys. Soft!
We shunt all danger if you mew him here
Unwitting of our hand.
Pyrr. I do not wear.
Athene's ægis on my jerkin, friend.
Lys. You can divinely drug his vanity
Without immortal aid. Attach him by 't,
For free he'll chafe. Drift with him in such wise
He'll not suspect our rudder.

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Pyrr. Ay, more lies.
Lys. Truth is no absolute virtue. 'Tis a vice
If 't takes a screw from safety.
Pyrr. There is law
Higher than Sparta utters. If not so,
What mean our altars, and a kneeling world?
Lys. Hmm! I delay the sacrifice. Dost know
I take my Dianessa? A virgin's hand
Must weave the victim's garland.
Pyrr. Ah, the moon
Of Artemis! A virgin's hand. They ask
Not mine?
Lys. You are a bride in Sparta's eyes.
Would Truth might speak it too! For Biades
Has won all love but yours.
Pyrr. I'll wed no traitor.
Lys. What? He is false?
Pyrr. Ay, false to Athens.
Lys. Phut!

[*Enter Hieron*]

Hie. How like you this, sir? Biades has stripped
The galley of its rowers,—sent them all
To his gilded *Ino*,—every boat in charter
To bear his trappings,—parchments, maps, and gifts
From Phernes,—curtains, instruments——
Lys. The stuff
Goes with the admiral, and what other way
Than by the boats? Say naught of 't.
Hie. This a time
To spend a feathering!
Lys. Nay——
Hie. And why send all?
A half—a third—had answered. There's not left
An oarsman on the galley save the men
Who brought you from the *Thetis*.

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Lys. You've the guard,—
Yourself its head. Give Biades his way
When prudence pays no cost. We've hedged and hemmed
His wrestling will until his pride is brashed
To the rebel quick——
Hie. Sst! He is here.
[*Biades stands in door*]
Bia. Lysander,
They hail you from Thrasyllus' ship. You stay
The rites.
Lys. [*Troubled*] But is it time——
Bia. Full time.
Lys. My boat——
Bia. Is waiting.
Lys. I—you, sir——
Bia. You'll bear my grace
To our priestly captains?
Lys. You stay here?
Bia. I shall,
If you'll not press me other. As you pray
For clearer omen and a morning battle,
Let only those whose land holds them untainted
Stand in the holy ring.
Lys. Above our prayers
This act will speak to Heaven in Sparta's name
And make her gods your own.
Bia. If that might be,
Lysander! To have no altars is a fate
Man can not bear for long.
Hie. The rowers, sir!
How soon do they return?
Bia. They've leave to see
The midnight toward with their fellow crew
On the *Ino*.

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Hie. Midnight!
Bia. Loyal beggars, all.
They're sad to lose their captain, and I pay
Their grieving flattery with this stinted lease
From duty here. They'll use 't in prayerful rite——
Hie. Not prayer! The casks will drip too free for that.
If any prayers come from the heart to throat,
They'll downward wash again, not out and fly.
Say'st midnight, sir?
Bia. I do. They will return
In time to set the galley from the cast
Of morning danger.
Hie. Move again? The ship
Is now to rearward, by some rods.
Bia. She is.
And shall go farther. Here's no fighting deck.
Hie. Ay, these soft cabins, Corinth-modelled as
A prince, would make a floating holiday,
Put soldiers from their place.
Bia. The ship must lie
Full east, on th' safest wave. We've treasure 'neath
These sails that make their weathered woof more dear
Than threaded gold of Hera's mantle.
Hie. Ah,
You mean the women.
Bia. No,—a woman. Come,
Lysander.
Lys. Sir, what time wilt take your place
Aboard the *Ino?*
Bia. Give me till the midnight.
I'll from that moment be your admiral.
But for these gentle hours that lie between,
I would as merest man use their light wings
To chase a hope through heaven.

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Lys. [*With a glance at Pyrrha*] And bring it down,
My lord!

[*Exeunt Lysander, Biades, and Hieron*]

Pyrr. Now, Impudence, no more's to do!
Go up and take thy crown. Before my eyes
He teaches them he wooes me, and my pride
Mutely abets his guile. [*Holds up the dagger*]
My fine defence,
Thou'rt warder to a bosom unbesieged.
In Biades' contempt I have a guard
That saves thine office. Go, you glittering mock!
[*In a passion of resolution she throws the dagger through the door*]
That's done. No matter. He does not look at me,
Or looks as though his eyes begged pardon of him,
For their chance stop on nothing.

[*Re-enter Biades, the dagger in his hand*]

Bia. Here's a toy
Caught from the rigging. Yours, I think.
[*Offers it to her. She does not take it*]
It must be dear. I've seen you fondle it.
Is it not yours?

Pyrr. It was.

Bia. Then is. And worth
Your keeping. A good blade, though Spartan plain.

Pyrr. I'm weary of it. In Athens I shall find
Another pattern.

Bia. [*Testing blade*] Fine and strong. Will wear
A hundred years, then make a door for death.
[*Turns it against his heart. She starts*]
You'll take it, Pyrrha. To throw it to the sea
Were waste for an Athenian.

Pyrr. Keep it then.

Bia. You give this blade to me?

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Pyrr. I care not. Keep
What you have praised.
Bia. [*Pressing it against his cheek*]
A gentle weapon,—but
I've somewhat 'gainst it.
[*Goes to door and throws it far into the sea*]
Kiss the waves, my friend!
[*Returns to Pyrrha and sits by her*]
Bia. [*Softly*] I leave the ship to-night.
Pyrr. [*Uneasy*] And time you led
The fleet to battle. You've excused delay
Till palling breath became the shroud of action,
And yet refused it funeral.
Bia. I know
How you have doubted. O, this soul of Sparta,
That can not trust! It peeps from every eye,
Deepest where kindest. Tags each friendly word
With its unspoken dread,—and comradeship,
That strives to wrap it in a gala cloak,
Strains vainly round the huge, dun doubt, agape
In dreary revelation.
Pyrr. You are free
To leave us.
Bia. Free? Five Spartan nobles watch
Beside me, move with every step, for so
The admiral must be honored! Hieron
Foregoes his place at sacrifice to serve
My dignity. Not for his gods he'll put
A furlong 'tween us.
Pyrr. He's the ship's good eye.
And all the men except the lords of guard
Are, by your grace, a-neighboring. Would you leave
The galley without watch?
Bia. No, Pyrrha, sweet.
But I would woo you with no ear at the door.

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Pyrr. [*Rising*] My lord!

Bia. [*Indifferent*] Nay, then. I can't oppose the sex
Of Aphrodite. My one frailty.

Pyrr. One!

Bia. What? I have more?

Pyrr. The moments of your life
Are not so many!

Bia. Gods be thanked, I'm young!
How may I change to please a Spartan scold?

Pyrr. Be anything you're not.

Bia. You have not heard
I am the admiral of the Spartan fleet,
With Persian Phernes yonder at my beck,
Broad-winged with all Phœnicia? You know not
I am a general?

Pyrr. Oh, to be that name,
Not make 't thy bauble! What dost know
Of secret, sleepless hours, and delving thought
That nations may lie safe? By what grave right
Wear you the title? What deep sacrifice?

Bia. Leave sacrifice to fools and women! Ay,
More lies are huddled in that saintly word
Than ever smirked outside it. The strong soul
Low bowing there, lies to his god,—the weak
Lies to the world behind a holy shield
That turns the spear of justice. Pallas, hear!
A general makes himself a master, lest
The State make him a servant.

Pyrr. True in *Athens!*
But you've another name. I've heard you called
The young philosopher. Play you at that.
'Twill tire naught but the tongue. Yours will go far.

Bia. Nay, spare me toil of spirit searching through
Earth, sea, and sky for phrases magical

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To wrap creation in, as 'twere a babe
Each man might call his own could he but find
Some good-wife fancy to deliver it.
No other hope?
Pyrr. They name you poet, too.
Build round your spirit an Elysian cheat
And buzz it through upon a golden wing.
Is that not idle enough?
Bia. You touch me now
With flattery's gold point. I wince and love
The pain. Yet I'd not be a frolic breath
At play with Spring and florets in the dew,
Or move in rhymèd courtesies before
The smile or frown of gods. Trick my dear soul
In May-day rags to catch a languid eye.
Babble of moods and minds, how some think this,
Some that, and some have never thought. Drone how
On such a day one struck another down,
Or led a fleet, or laid a city wall.
Pyrr. What would you sing then, pray?
Bia. I would not sing.
Was there not poetry before men spake?
I'd go behind the broidered veil we've wrought
Before the face of one that we loved much
And then forgot for beauty of the shroud.
The old lere's lost, the new but irks our dream.
We listen to ourselves, while round us ever
Are worlds that vainly pluck us to their doors,
Giving us sign in lightning, heat, and wave,
In flake of snow, flint-spark, and crystal rock,
In stones that make the iron creep, and color,
Fair flag and challenge to our shuttered minds.
Pyrr. [*Moving nearer*] Oh!
Bia. [*Seeming to forget her*]
Round our lives is life whose destiny
Is that frontier no word of ours has crossed,

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But man to come shall plant and harvest there,
Where his soul sets the plough.
Pyrr. [*Softly*] You know that too?
Bia. That life shall warm his barest common way
Of in and out. In field and market-place,
He'll lay his cheek 'gainst its unbodied love
And flush translations of its silent touch.
Then will be poets! Thought that now must fail
In bird-wing flight, shall from a violet's eye
O'erlook the sun. Till then I will not sing.
Pyrr. Not fight, philosophize, or sing!
What's left for an Athenian?
Bia. [*Remembering her*] Love, fair Pyrrha!
You know the tale how Chaos once uncurled
Her laboring bulk from round a fire-leafed rose
And sent its petals drifting down to fields
Where mortals foot with chance? Whoso they touch
Are lovers always, and one came to me.
Pyrr. Now here's ambition! And you live for that?
Bia. Ay there's the charm contents me with dull earth,
And puts a rainbow in my listless hand.
The way is pleasant if the road be love's,
And I'd not shorten it by one maid's eye.
To be a lover,—that's the graceful thing.
Then one moves velvetly, forgets no curve,
And lives his picture, line and color true.
Pyrr. That rôle's struck from your play, you'll find, my lord.
Maidens will smile, but scorn will set the lip,
And women's eyes be warm, but hate their fire
For you, the traitor.
Bia. Traitor?
Pyrr. [*In the door*] See the gleam
On Athens, yours no more. The softest breast
Within her walls is steel when you are named.

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Bia. But there are maids in Sparta.
Pyrr. Not for you,
A traitor to the soil that gave you life.
Bia. That soil first cast me off.
Pyrr. A mother strikes
Her child, but should the child return the blow
Gods would droop eyes and blush.
Bia. But were I true
To my own land, I should be false to yours.
Pyrr. A virtue that. A maid might love you then.
Bia. A Spartan maid?
Pyrr. A Spartan maid. But now
We hold you as no more than loathèd bait
To capture Athens. Used as a stuck fly
To hook a chub!

[*Enter Hieron*]

Bia. What saucy fury sports
With Hieron? His even smile 's unfixed
As the middle of two minds.
Hie. Sir, Phernes sends
Six maidens from his ship to dance before you.
The noble Persian chooses time most fit
For wantoning,—the hour of sacrifice
And battle prayer.
Bia. You're justly kindled. What
Though it be royal custom in his East,—
A grace from king to king,—to garnish danger
With frillet of relief that makes death seem
The last-dropped toy, we'll dare to let him know
That we are Greeks, and walk the edge of graves
With eyes upon the gods. Go, pack them off!
Hie. Why,—so I meant. The act struck rudely on
Our ritual hour. But if his Eastern mind
Paints it a courtesy——
Bia. A sovereign honor.

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Hie. He is of haughty blood,—burns at rebuff——

Bia. Ay, like a hornet blind. A thousand times
I've eased his fret and run his humor's mould
Like summer wax, lest he should break from Sparta
That stood in rigid ruin. Now I leave it!
His anger can be put to gentlest sleep,
But 'tis no babe when stirred. Choose as you will.

Hie. The honor is to you. Be yours the answer.

Bia. I'm worn with him. Three hours to-day I played
His vanity, while chance touched either side,
Waiting the word that should cut through suspense
And seal him ours for battle.

Hie. To huff his pride
'Tween this and dawn would poorly soothe our own
At an uncertain cost. But let him leer
I' the oracles' face. . . .

Bia. He has not sent Alissa?

Hie. There's one so calls herself. Spoke out the name
As we should fall before it.

Bia. She's most free
In Phernes' heart. Knows all the honey-ways
To his secret soul, and what is said to her
He'll hear ere morn. As you love victory,
I hope you met her gently.

Hie. If surprise
Made greeting harsh, I will undo that harm
With softer welcome. And beseech you, sir,
To suffer this mistimed civility
For Sparta's sake.

Bia. I will, dear Hieron,
Since 'tis your suit.

Hie. Thanks, thanks, my lord.

Bia. Let them come in. I'll see their briefest dance,
And give Alissa one commending word,

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Which straight as faithful bee she'll hive
In Phernes' ear.

[*Exit Hieron*]

What think you of it, Pyrrha?
You do approve me?

Pyrr. Approve your wits, my friend.
Had they been Spartan trained, you'd bring them off,
Untarnished still, from argument with Zeus.

Bia. When Pallas praises, bow.

Pyrr. Poor Hieron
Is now the sweating agent of your will
To see these callets dance.

Bia. Unpitiful!
I'd touch my lips to Lethe, and you'd snatch
The oblivious drop from me! You know how dear
The bond that shall be cut with sword of dawn,—
So close no seer may tell which shall bleed most,
Athens or her lost son.

Pyrr. Art low at last?

Bia. Dun, dun, my Pyrrha, as a Barbary pigeon!
So low not all my pride can vaunt me up.
Then let me have my wine,—the draught of eyes,
Of music and of smiles, till I be drunk
And sleep.

[*Enter six Athenian youths, led by Clearchus, all disguised as Persian dancers. As they dance before Biades his pleasure quickens to abandonment*]

Bia. Ah, Pyrrha, you've denied my heart
All noble love, but here 's a pleasure left.
Soft eyes and gentle bosoms may be mine
Where scorn is taught to sleep and never sting.
. . . . . That is Alissa. We must honor her.

[*He signals Clearchus, and the others pass out, leaving him to dance alone. As he ventures more flirtatiously about Biades, Pyrrha's disgust increases and she re-*

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treats. Clearchus, dancing mockingly, follows her to door, and when she has passed through audaciously closes it]

Bia. Now! Quick! In name of Zeus! The senators
Received my message?

Clea. [*Darting to Biades*] Ay, the answer's here!
[*Gives him a parchment*]
Full pardon! Athens will lay down her walls
To make your entry proud! Her gates are small,
For honor she intends you!

Bia. [*Glances at parchment and sobs*]
My Athens! Mine! Though she should take my life,
And my bruised body fling unburied forth,
Yet would my shade drop kisses on her soil
And weep to leave it for Elysium! [*With sudden control*]
What of my plan?

Clea. Adopted, in each item.
Soon as the dropping moon is in the sea,
The Athenian rowers, coming as your own,
Will board this galley and bear her a bird
To th' harbor nest.

Bia. They've force to meet the guards?

Clea. Thrice measured, sir. The *Theia*——

Bia. My own ship!

Clea. Your own—will meet you, every sailor true
As when he wept your banishment. And Phaon,
Critias, Pelagon, Antiganor,
With twenty senators and men of name,
Wait on her deck in welcome.

Bia. Back, ye tears!
The rowers know my signal?

Clea. Yes, my lord.
Three cressets on the left,—set here in this
Embrazure. They will watch, near as they dare,

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And instantly as darts your triple gleam
Their oars will sweep you answer.
[*A commotion without*]
Bia. Hist! What's wrong?
[*Enter Hieron and Pyrrha. Hieron goes to Clearchus and tears off his veil and head-dress*]
Clea. O, pardon! I'll confess!
Hie. 'Tis you, my lord,
I now unmask, not this bought wretch.
Bia. What, sir?
Hie. Your Persian dancers are Athenian boys,
All slim as lizards. We o'er-eyed their steps,
And on suspicion gave them such a pinch
The truth flew out.
Bia. Their guilt does not prove mine.
Is it my crime that Athens touched me near
With bribe of pardon?
Pyrr. Hear the boy. You are
Clearchus? And of Athens?
Clea. I am.
Pyrr. You brought
His pardon. Did he welcome it?
Clea. He did.
Bia. He lies! The coward lies!
Clea. He did agree
That Phernes should draw off his fleet and join
With Athens.
Bia. Oh! Where are the Olympian thunders
That they now let you live?
Hie. Draw off his fleet
To-night?
Clea. Ere dawn.
Bia. That such an atom—such
A trifle of a body could enclose
So great a lie!

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Clea. The Persian is at watch,
Waiting the signal——
Bia. Toad!
Clea. If pardon came,
Two cressets set——
Bia. I'll shred him!
Clea. At the left——
Just here, my lord, would start the Persian ships
For Athens.
Bia. Oh!
Clea. But if three cressets burnt,
Then he would hold to Sparta.
Hie. Three?
Clea. Three, sir.
Look in his bosom if you'd read the proof.
His pardon's there.
Bia. By the altars I have lost,
By Sparta's yet unwon, I swear he lies!
[*Pyrrha snatches the parchment from his bosom*]
Bia. You bat—you mole—you cur-born flea——
Clea. [*To Hieron*] O, sir,
Your mercy! Save me from him!
Hie. Wait without.
Pyrr. Full pardon! Bring the irons! We are sold!
Irons for Biades!
Bia. [*Accepting defeat*] Ay, let me wear
My honor's livery. Every foe-locked gyve
Will be my country's kiss, and make my blood
Flow proud beneath it. Irons! Load me down,
Now that you know me man, and not the thrall
Of vilest fear that buys suspected breath
With a mother-city's doom.
Pyrr. I'll grant you, sir,
That by this act you do no longer lie
In the unconsidered trash of estimation,

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But have crept up in my surprisèd mind
To where I keep my jewels of regard.
That is soon said,—but for the rest, you die.
And more than die, for we shall hurl your name
A palsy over Athens.
Bia. You'll not fight
Athens and Persia!
Pyrr. Persia is not lost.
Your signal is unlit.
Hie. But we'll light ours!
Three cressets——
Pyrr. [*Stopping him*] Wait! The event's too great
To helve with such slight word. That snivelling blab
May 've lied, or crossed the signals, for the young
Are easiest dyed in craft, and take its hue
As natively as innocence doth wear
Its smile in sleep.
Hie. What then?
Pyrr. You'll go to Phernes.
Hie. There are no boats.
Pyrr. Tut, take the boats that brought
Those purfled cymlings here. Their rowers too.
Ah, Biades, you'll serve us still. And thought
To trap all Sparta with this tip-toe bait!
We have a saying, "Wit against the world,—"
And there's another too, "The last lie wins."
Hast heard it, Biades? We'll bear your word
To Phernes that with dawn you move with him
Upon the Athenian sails.
Bia. He'll hear no word
From Spartan mouth. So 'twas agreed between us,
To annul such move as this if chance should strip
My bent of cover. I alone may reach
His ear with Sparta's prayer.

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Pyrr. We'll cast for proof
Of that. If true, we shall remember, sir,
That Sparta has won cities with no aid
From Persia.
Bia. You'll not go alone to meet
The strength of Athens?
Pyrr. Your far-wingèd name
And sea-born battle-skill shall go with us.
Your single arm 's no loss, but in your fame,
Yet ours to use, the Spartan strength
Is doubled. Ha! They call us landmen,—say
We must have feet on ground ere we can fight.
But you they fear, bred to the wave, and first
Of their commanders.
Bia. Let me die, but leave
My name unmurdered.
Pyrr. It shall be outflung
In challenge to the Athenians. They know well
The sailor rabble loves you, and will oppose
But half a heart to Biades. Some too,
Of higher place, believe you wronged, and fear
The angered gods will station on your side.
By spearman Ares, you shall keep the oath
Great-sworn on Sparta's ground, to set her lance
Through Athens' triple shield! Ay, though you lie
In irons waiting death.
Bia. The sunken souls
Of deepest, damnèd Dis have never borne
So vile a sting! You can not mean it, Pyrrha.
Cast on my soul what Pluto would disbar
From his fire-vaulted hell? I'll proudly die
For treachery to you, but clear my name
To Athens. Take not life and honor too!
Pyrr. One you may save,—your life.
Bia. What do you say?

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Pyrr. Draw Phernes back to us, and you shall live.
Bia. You offer me but death, knowing I could not live
A traitor.
Pyrr. You choose to die as one?
Bia. Oh, Zeus,
All-giver, hear!
Pyrr. What gain is death to you
If reputation dies eternally
In Athens' hate? Sparta will do as much
As spare your life.
Bia. Nay——
Pyrr. She shall nothing know
Of this hour's lapse——
Bia. O, bitter stars! O, Death
Past fatal!—reaching o'er thy charnel bound
To usurp the immortal garden! Die a traitor!
Never will dew from a forgiving eye
Fall on my grave!
Pyrr. Nor will the upbraiding gaze
Of Heaven be more tender. For you chose
To risk your country's life on turn of chance,
Having no surety that drawn to danger
You then could pluck her out. Ah, made her fate
Your stake at dice, because, escaped the hazard,
You'd toss with her to fortune! And your guilt
Is heavy in her fall as though your hand
Bore down her last defence and fierce untrussed
Her heart to th' wolvish air.
Bia. Oh, Pyrrha, Pyrrha!
Pyrr. Then why haste on to death? The noblest shades
Will make no room for you where'er they walk.
Why rush through the first gate to meet their cold
Immortal scorn?
Bia. But life with honor gone!

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Pyrr. If death could buy it, then 'twere wise
To buy so goldenly. But that's too late.
Choose life,—with honor such as Sparta lays
On those who serve but her. This treachery
That we've by hap unbagged in 'ts eanling hour
Shall be safe snugged again. And cherished too!
For in my eyes it is the one brave flower
Of your most barren being. None shall know it,
And Sparta, as she will, may laurels weave
About your faith.

Bia. But Hieron?

Pyrr. [*To Hieron*] You'll swear with me? [*He hesitates*]
In Sparta's name? [*Takes his hand*] And mine?

Bia. No, no!

Hie. I'll swear.

Bia. Oh, not that price! No, till the end
O' the world!

Pyrr. Life, Biades, life!

Bia. I will not do it!
Athens may singly conquer!

Pyrr. Then you die
By Sparta's hand, and Athens holds your name
Accursed through time. The irons, Hieron.

[*Biades hunches despairingly, his face hidden*]

Pyrr. [*Apart*] Gods! He will yield!

Bia. [*Looking up*] I'll do it,—dare to live,—
And Attica may call me what she will.
A traitor breathes, and feels the blessed sun.
He's ne'er so poor but can his housing find
In alms-lapped Nature. Her unchoosing airs
Ask not his name before they touch his brow
And tell him when 'tis spring. He yet may dream
In unrebuking shades, and birds will sing
As liquidly as though he were not by.
Food is yet food, and wine is ever wine.

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I will not die. [*Rises*] By Maia's son, I'll live!
What is my country but the bit of earth
Where chance did spawn me? 'Tis no treachery.
We're traitors unto love, not hate,—to trust,
Not doubt and slander such as Athens poured
Upon me guiltless.
Pyrr. [*Crossing to him*] So you've found a way
To save both life and honor!
Bia. May a worm
Not creep to cleaner dust? Pyrrha, be kind.
Spare me the trampling foot.
Pyrr. We've lost an hour.
You'll send to Phernes?
Bia. First we'll signal him.
He may be setting off. We must despatch,
For if he saw no sign he meant to draw
His fleet from doubtful waters and give aid
To neither side. [*Taking up a light*]
Three cressets—that was true.
When once these lights have spoken, he'll receive
Your envoy as myself. Then Hieron
May bear confirming word to him, and bring
Assurance back.
Hie. [*To Pyrrha*] You do not doubt?
Pyrr. Doubt now?
Nay, Hieron. I'll trust him with his *life.*
Hie. But——
Bia. [*Trembling*] O, ye gazing gods, must it be done?
In Athens' living heart set up the torch
That leaves her a charred blotch where she lay white
'Neath heaven and smiled up to sister stars!
Pyrr. Come, Biades!
Bia. Shall not the earth be lost
To God's own eye when Athens, quenched, no more
Marks where we wander? I can not do it!

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Pyrr. [*Taking the cresset*] Too late,
My lord!

[*Fixes light in the open embrasure, then places two others. Biades falls back, mantling his face*]

Hie. To Phernes now! We must not boggle this!

Pyrr. If you've a doubt, sir, look on that.
[*Points to Biades*]

Hie. I'll hasten back to you.

Bia. But note our light.
The galley rowers may return ere you,
And move us to the east.

Hie. I shall not lose you.

Bia. What escort will you take? A noble one
Will best please Phernes.

Hie. Mirador and Agis
Shall go with me. Meanthes shall remain
To be your watch.

Bia. You'll tell them nothing?

Hie. Sir,
I've sworn. I shall say naught but this. That Athens
Proffered you pardon, and you hold to Sparta.

[*Exit Hieron. Pyrrha watches from the door until the boats put off. The sea is now dark. Biades takes up a harp and strums it*]

Pyrr. [*Turning*] You can do that? And I—I held my heart
At halt, there at the door, nor turned my head
Lest pity should emburn my eyes to tears.
[*Crosses to him*]
Dost know that all the juniper in the world,
Burnt in thy house of honor, would not cleanse
Its doors of stench? [*Throws the harp aside*]
And you can use that air
For breath of song!

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Bia. Those are the bitterest words
That ever dropped me gall, but I can find
A crushèd balsam in them,—for they say
You might have loved me, Pyrrha.
Pyrr. I might.
Bia. You did.
The moment that I cast my Spartan mask
And showed me true to Athens, you were mine.
That instant there was joy-fall on your heart
That swept its icy sentinels with fire,
And they were down. Oh, had I then proved staunch,
Ta'en helmet off to death and bade him strike,
You would have closed my eyes with kisses warm
As rose-drift on a tomb——
Pyrr. Nay, I'd have kept
Those eyes to be my light on earth, not star
Elysian skies. Had fought for you against
My mother Sparta. Fought as woman fights
For her one love,—with wit and armèd tongue,
And cunning that throws puzzle on the gods.
Fought till subduèd Death had knelt to Fate
And prayed your life for me!
Bia. Have I lost that?
Pyrr. You yielded—sank—unlustred even your soul
For a poor pinch of time——
Bia. But if some touch
Of heaven could make me true again——
Pyrr. Look on
Those lights, that you with single breath could turn
To weeping smoke,—they've lit a quenchless wreck
That all your sighs blow vain against,—a flame
Ungovernable to remorse. Not furrowing winds
That split the watery fields to Thetis' bed,
And make a foamy Ural of her shore,
Can sweep it out. Ay, groan and shake,
And draw your mantle up! Behind a cover

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Thick as Taygetus' sides, I'd see you limned
In shame!

Bia. [*Springing up*]. What's shame to love? To love fire-sprung
From instant meeting of fore-strangered eyes?
And such was ours, there in that Athens' grove.
Imperial of itself, it asks no loan
Of subject virtue's smock to drape it royal.
As fen-born vapors seem to nest the stars,
Yet far below them do but thatch the world
When they look down, the vassal qualities
May lift no touch to love, that yet must wear,
To earth's unvantaged eyes, their reek and hue.

Pyrr. Aerial love is but an earthling still,
It must come down for food or mortal die,
And what but virtues feed it?

Bia. Nay, you speak
Of a fair, lesser thing,—a grace not lit
From thurible in uncreated Hand,
But coaxed from clay to a persuaded life.
Garbed as the days,—patched, plastered, hung with dear
Possessive vanities, it serves to make
Contentment's bed, and cook a patient meal
On comfort's hearth,—even snuggles in the void
That else might ache, sings low, and makes
Companioned feet tread bravely to the grave.
It has a thousand names, but never one
Is love. Be thine that white, ungendered spark,
And naught can feed it, naught can make it less.
Virtue and vice, nobility and shame,
Are rags that drop away, while you sweep on,
Stripped as a flame, with arms about your star.

[*Pyrrha is silent. Both start at sound of a noise on the water*]

Pyrr. What sound is that?

Bia. The rowers are returning.

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Pyrr. So quietly?
Bia. [*Goes to door and closes it*]
The world shall not come in
On me and you. Be mine this broken hour,
And Hieron may flute through after-time
At secret doors where you lock up your favors.
For you will go with him.
Pyrr. A prophet too?
Bia. You'll make his home, but I shall come and go
The unseen master there.
Pyrr. Now for the vision!
Bia. You'll watch your door,—the unheard step is mine,—
And rock the babe born of a dream of me.
And I, far-wandered, lost unto myself,
Shall never lose you, Pyrrha. As the light
Wrapping the wave reveals its silver dance,
My being shall exult through shade and wear
The chlamys of your gleam. Your voice behind
The wind shall draw me lover-lipped to meet
Adventure's breath. You'll lie upon the hush
That girdles evening,—be the thrill within
The throstle's note, and silence when
His song is done.
Pyrr. Nay, it will speak of Phania,
Of Sybaris,——
Bia. Ay, and a hundred more
In whom I've sought for thee, my Pyrrha, always thee!
'Twill speak of them as statues speak of shards
About their feet,—the sculptor's broken dreams
That made the perfect one.
[*The ship rocks*]
Pyrr. We're moving!
Bia. Yes,
You know,—to safer waters. Listen, Pyrrha,
To me—to *me!*

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Pyrr. Those sounds——
Bia. [*Kneels*] Hear *me!* My head
I'll votive lay till you may set your feet
Like tangled roses in my curls——
[*Pyrrha springs toward the door, but Biades is before her. The noises increase. Groans, blows, shouts*]
Pyrr. Aside!
I'll pass!
Bia. O, save our bones. I am the stronger.
You know 't.
Pyrr. You! I'll wind you like a thread!
Bia. You didn't.
Pyrr. Didn't . . .
Bia. When we wrestled.
Pyrr. When. . . .
Oh, *then!* My arm was lame. Come, I will pass!
Bia. Nay, 'twas your heart that spared me!
Pyrr. Ay, like this!
[*Throws him aside. He staggers against the wall for support. She opens door. Two soldiers in armor silently oppose spears to her passage. She slowly closes the door*]
Pyrr. Where are we going?
Bia. You love me. What an arm!
'Twas never lame!
Pyrr. Come! Tell me what's our port,
Then I shall know one place we do *not* go.
Bia. Tut, love! Pry into men's affairs?
Be calm——
Pyrr. What does this mean? [*Advancing*] I'll know!
Bia. [*Retreating*] You shall! It means
"The last lie wins." We go to harbor.
Pyrr. Ah! . . .
Those rowers . . .

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Bia. Faithful and fleet as ever bore
An Athenian general home. They came upon
Your signal——
Pyrr. Mine?
Bia. They lay at watch, not Phernes.
Look on those lights! O, trinal star, set high
By my beloved! My honor's flaming hedge——
Pyrr. You fly,
But in a net! The Spartans heard those shouts.
They are in chase—you'll see——
Bia. They're unprepared.
The captains off their ships, the guards in doubt,
And oarsmen half asleep. But let them come
Far as they dare, and if they dare too far
From Persia's shelter, the Athenian fleet
Will close like jaws about them.
Pyrr. [*Sits, with sudden hopelessness*] You have won,
My lord.
Bia. I have.
Pyrr. What will you do with me?
Bia. I'll wed thee, sweet.
Pyrr. I'll not——
Bia. Yes, love, you will.
There is a dagger hangs in Phelas' shop,
Shall be your bridal gift. A prizèd blade
Of coppered gold, hued like a battle morning.
Smooth-cheeked as Artemis, although inlaid
With pictured tale. A captured Amazon,
Wrought palely in alloy,—a silvered fear
On th' bronzen flush of courage,—bows before
Her conqueror, a knight who gently bends
As I do now——
Pyrr. [*Thrusting him off*] No! Never! I'll not trust
Your dolphin nature! Long as fish have fins
You'll sport in every sea! Go—go to Phania!

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Bia. [*Turns angrily from her*] Ay, by my gods that I
have found again,
I shall wed none but an Athenian maid!
[*Pyrrha swoons. He rushes to her*]
Her heart is still. O, curse my double-tongue!
She's dead—she's dead! She takes the Spartan way—
To die, not yield! Oh, Pyrrha, Pyrrha, Pyrrha!
[*Rushes about distractedly*]
I will not live! I'll leap into the sea!
Pyrr. [*On her elbow, as he reaches door*]
You might catch cold.
[*He stares at her. She sits up*]
Is this your grace in love?
Your pictured ease, with no dissuasive line?
Bia. O, Pyrrha, peace! Let us be done with cheat
And mockery!
Pyrr. [*Rising*] My heart on that, my lord!
Bia. Own thou art mine! My world when sunsets die!
My breath of meadows lying past the moon!
Compassionate this earth, and in my soul
Fix thee its centre. Say thou 'lt come!
Pyrr. My lord,
Could I be sure . . . . .
Bia. Ah, Pyrrha, there's no light
Falls from thine eye that does not sway me like
A bee in rose wind-shaken. I am thine.
There'll be no battle, but a nuptial feast
With three great armies for our brothered guests.
Your land and mine are one. Give me your hand.
Pyrr. I will. For Sparta's sake.
Bia. And love's!
Pyrr. [*Giving her hand*] And love's.

[*Curtain*]

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ACT V

SCENE: *The garden of Pelagon, as in first act. Enter youths and maidens dancing about Pyrrha and Biades. They sing:*

Hymen, god of bended knees,
  Who would gain to thee must lose!
Take from us thy merry fees,
  Though our fairest thou dost choose,—
Pyrrha and our Biades!

Fling the garland and the wreath!
  Roses, roses consecrate,
That upgive their happy breath
  In an ardor 'neath our feet,
Kissing fortune in their death!

Sparta 's won, and Athens' wed!
  Shyest hours of midnight, bring
Charm and blessing for the bed
  Whence a fairer Greece shall spring
And her golden peace be bred!

[*They dance off, lower right, as Pelagon and Stesilaus enter middle left*]

Pel. Ha, neatly sung! By Hermes, they have made
A tickling in my sandals.
Ste. Frivol!
Pel. Eh?
Nay, youth must wind his horn——
Ste. Not in my ears!

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Pel. Though he never come to the hunt. But Biades
Has run the chase, and 's bravely home again,
The game in pack.
Ste. Too noble game for him!
My girl! That I should ever play the sire
To a fop of Athens!
Pel. If the burn's so raw,
You've secret salve for it.
Ste. Yes. 'Tis not my blood
That so forgets its source!
Pel. Sh! Stesilaus!
A little butter on the tongue, my friend,
Does no man harm.
Ste. Butter a hackle, not
My tongue! If I'm so rubbed, I'll rasp the winds
Till they sprout ears. Don't "sh" me, Pelagon.
I'll muffle in no corners.
Pel. Hist, I say——
Ste. Don't zizz into my beard! We are not curs
To nose and smell in council!
Pel. Ruin's on us!
You will be heard——
[*Enter Menas, upper right*]
Menas. Joy to the noble fathers!
Sweet saviors of our city!
Ste. Sweet!
Menas. What says
Our Stesilaus?
Pel. Ahem! The Spartan joy
Is ever dumb. But see him stirred to heart
That by a gift from out his very life,
His dearest daughter, peace is home in Athens,
And 's forced no more to camp and cadge and beg
At our shut gates. Yet it goes hard to part
Wi' the fairest branch on 's tree.

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Menas. In Biades
He finds a treasured son.
Ste. By a mermaid's shoes,
A precious son!
Menas. How, sir?
Pel. Indeed, indeed,
A jewel of a son! Will you, friend Menas,
Float with the senators, and bring to shore
Report of how they drift,—what currents favor
And what now counter us?
Menas. I'll go, my lords,
To hear the latest honor they conclude
Best caps your fame, and bring it in a word. [*Exit Menas*]
Ste. I had two minds to throw the truth in 's face
And see him strangle on it.
Pel. Friend, wouldst make
My old knees creak to earth? I sue to you
Be soft as prudence. Shall we now be false
To our dearly tended hope—united Greece?
Now when the fact is on us, and our dream
Walks in the day? I beg you clear your heart
Of selfish fire that eats the very pattern
Of love's new world. It is ungraced, perverse
As altar flame that would devour the shrine
'Twas lit to honor.
Ste. Think of Greece? What's Greece,
When my own daughter pairs with——
Pel. Nay, but mine.
When you are bitterest set, say to yourself
She's of my loins, and when more softly taken,
Then call her yours. But openly be constant
To a father's right in her, and proudly sire
Her honors. And 's for Biades, he's but
A brocket yet, his antlers barely bossed.
My oath upon it, your reshaping hand

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Firm-cupped about his overweening spring,
Will be a second cradle where he'll grow
Fair to your fashion. Think on that.
Ste. I will.
There's comfort. Ay, so, so. The terms of peace
Make him a Spartan. Pyrrha stood with me
Stout-willed on that.
Pel. Then whist! You trust your wife?
Ste. You speak to Stesilaus.
Pel. Eh, I know
You've her in hand. My Sachinessa now— [*Sighs*]
But she loves Phania best. That locks her tongue.
And, friend, do you not see the high all-ruling Will
Has moved behind our own?
Ste. I think it so.
Our aim achieves its heaven, though we smart
Beneath it. To the outer glozing fame
That now attires us splendent, we may add
Inmost applause. When we exchanged our babes,
'Twas for this end and day, and had we held
To our first intent and taken our own again,
Our hope had died unfruitive. 'Twas there
That deity came in and shifted us
To th' true sybillic course.
Pel. Who dares say else?
We'll wear the issue as a sacred robe
Fallen on us from Olympus.
Ste. Which our wisdom
Fits comely to us. Forget it not, such gift
Had been withheld from minds too poor to be
The heirs of Zeus.
Pel. But if the clay-eyed mob,
Whose pottage traffic up Olympian paths
Blocks commerce godly and invisible——
Ste. Tush, cut the string, if you have aught in bag.

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Pel. Why, I would say if some of grosser sight
Than our two selves, should fumble on our secret
That Pyrrha is Athens born——
Ste. Nay, put your fears
In pocket. It shall not be known.
[*Enter Biades*]
Bia. Ha, nunky!
Where is my happy father? [*Sees Stesilaus*]
A suit, my lord!
I've Pyrrha's leave to make our home in Athens
If thou wilt bless our dwelling. Crave thy grace
For sake of her in whom thy pride best flowers!
Here she'll o'erlay all Spartan crudity
With suavest bloom, and take e'en native place
Where Athens' love would set her.
Ste. Never, sir! [*Exit, middle left*]
Bia. The gray fox snaps. Ho, but I'll draw his teeth,
And he shall yelp for 't too!
Pel. Shame, sir! Not give
The road to him? The father of your bride?
Bia. I will when she's his daughter.
Pel. What! What, boy?
Bia. I say when she's his daughter. Let that in
At your good ear, and in the t'other one
I'll call *you* father.
Pel. Ruin! It's come!
Bia. Who thinks
I'd make that Spartan grunt my father, knows
Not me! What? Set that boding beard at head
Of my Athenian house? Or go to Sparta
To hut me where I would not ask a stall
For a borrowed horse?
Pel. But——
Bia. Scratch my helpless throat
With bread a pig would stick at? Swallow brew

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Of salt and soot? And chafe my pumiced skin
With itching linsey?—or an untanned hide,
As man were still the beast that wore it?
Pel. Peace,
My son——
Bia. Say grace for leeks and goose-foot?
Pel. But——
Bia. Though Eros pinned me head and foot with shafts,
I've saved my eyes, bless my united wits,
And know the high-road! I'll not lose me on
A pig-trail to a sty.
Pel. But if these Spartans hear
They'll sack the city! Zeus deliver us!
We're lost! we're lost! Oh, Biades!
Bia. [*Calm*] Talk in a muff, good father Pelagon,
Or we indeed are lost.
Pel. You'll keep the secret?
Bia. A time. I've plans in seed will make all Sparta
A garden for my Athens, where her fame
Shall browse to its tallest. Trust me, Pelagon.
I'm still a general!
[*Enter, lower right, young men who surround Biades, and press him off, singing*]
Gander now must keep with goose!
Biades, O, Biades,
Thou shalt ne'er the cord unloose,
For the mighty god decrees
He shall hang who dares the noose!
[*Re-enter Stesilaus*]
Ste. He's gone? I took
My anger off where it might safely blow.
This path brushed clear by Heaven must not be closed
By our stumbling selves. The widgeon! He would fly
Above the eagle, but I'll snip his feathers,
Give me good time! He'd live in Athens, ha!

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And swore on Hera's altar he would be
A son of Sparta!
Pel. Nay, I noted, sir,
That Sparta was not named in 's oath.
Ste. What now?
Pel. Naught, naught, my friend! Yet he but swore to make
The land of Pyrrha his.
Ste. And what meant that
But Sparta? If his warm wooer's oath must cool,
We've winters that will do it.
Pel. Caution's best.
Slow-mare will get you home.
Ste. A year or two
Of good black bread, and free winds on his skin
Will take the maiden from his cheeks and set
A true man's beard there. Tush! I thought that Fate,
Granting my main desire, gave me this plague,
Which, with the rest, now proves my life has pleased
High arbiters. You're silent, Pelagon.
Pel. No, no! Yes, yes! I think so. 'Tis indeed!
Ste. Come, come, my friend! We will go forth and meet
The occasion as a guest, bethinking us
We walk between mankind and deity.
[*They start out and are met by Alcanor and Phania who fall before them*]
Pha. [*Kneeling to Stesilaus*] Your blessing, father!
Alc. [*At Pelagon's feet*] Blessing, dearest father!
Pel. What, what!
Pha. [*To Stesilaus*] Forgive your child!
Alc. The priest——
Ste. My child?
Alc. The priest has made us one.
Pel. What priest? Who dared
Defile the altar with such rite?

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Alc. [*Rising*] Defile?
Though you're my Phania's father, you shall cast
No stain upon that holy ceremony
Whose odor yet is round us. Sir, the priest
Has blessed us. Do you as you please. Come, Phania!
Come, sweet! We'll smile at this. Though a father's curse
Bethorn our way, a gentler heaven will drop
Its soft approval where thy feet must pass. [*Going*]
Pel. Speak, Stesilaus! Stop your wretched son!
Alc. Not wretched, sir, while Phania is my own.
We shall be blest when you, too late, beseech
Unhearing gods forgive you this!
Pel. Stay, sir!
O, miserable boy!
Pha. No, father, no!
He's happy in my love as leaf in air,
As the sea-crystalled fish, as lotos in
Its pool,—and I—O, sir, my joy has wings,
And tho' I love you dear and daughterly,—
Who gave me life,—your anger has no weight
To keep my feet on earth. Like twirling lark
Too high for storm to reach, I dance above
Displeasure's cloud. [*Trips off with Alcanor*]
Pel. Sweet wretches! Here's a turn!
My little Phania! Friend, what shall we do?
Ste. Again the finger of the gods.
Pel. The gods
To limbo! I will save my daughter!
Ste. Yours?
Pel. Yea, by each hour of prattle at my knee!
By all my care that's been her constant nurse,
And every joy that from devotion sprang
To meet me like a flower as she grew,
She's mine, mine, mine! Oh, Stesilaus, oh,

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Whosever she may be, I love the chick,
And she shall not be damned!
[*Enter, upper left, Sachinessa and Archippe*]
Ste. Here's a reproach
Comes with a dual mouth. If we show doubt,
They'll put us under pestle. Rally, sir!
Sac. [*To Archippe*] Are you all lump?
Pick up your courage. Why!
The gods are gods by their audacity.
I'll bring it off. Now, Pelagon?
Pel. [*Who has turned to flee*] What, you,
My love?
Sac. Such heavy news! Enough to make
The gods no more co-venture with a world
Augmented so!
Pel. What, Sachinessa, what?
Sac. Our Phania's married to Alcanor.
Pel. Eh?
Sac. Now are you pleased? Now is your cruelty
Full-fed, or must it glut again?
Pel. My sweet——
Sac. You'll meddle with high Zeus! Have you enough?
Pel. Oh, Sachinessa!
Sac. Brother and sister bound
In an abhorrent union that will drive
Their shades forever from Elysian ground!
Nay, even Hades will make fast her gates
'Gainst such offenders, innocently vile!
Archippe, speak to that unbending man,
Half author of this shame! I'd thin his beard
If Heaven had mocked me with his long, smug face
For husband! Ugh! The whiskered horse!
Arc. Dumb, sir?
You've no defence?—no master argument
To prove your wisdom's never off the road

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To Zeus' gate? Not once in all your life,
Although your daughter's to her brother wedded?
Ste. 'Tis well. I can not doubt the gods.
[*They stare at him*]
Arc. Her brother born?
So foul a hap?
Ste. A thing too dread in thought,
And in the act unutterable if Zeus
Be unconcerned in it. Therefore believe
His hand here moves, and holy majesty
O'errules the mortal scruple, so dividing
This horror from its kind. May it not be
The blood of Stesilaus hath in 'ts flow
A heavenly tinct that makes it not a sin,
But rather virtue, to keep pure the stream
From baser founts? They've done no more than kings
And gods before them.
Sac. Pelagon, *your* croak!
Pel. I take a lower ground, my dearest dove.
All Athens knows me modest——
Sac. Ay to that!
Can blush as deep as any crow that flies!
Pel. Now, now! From first to last I've held it truth
That breeding scantles birth, and on that count
Make Phania our daughter.
Sac. Oh, you do?
Pel. I stand on this, that training is the man,
Or woman, let us say, and not the blood
We buried with our fathers. So these two
Mate not ancestrally, but in their lives
That distantly upbred have not between them
A structural thread to bind them of one house.
Sac. What men are these?
Arc. I am no more afraid
Of him I thought was Stesilaus.

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Ste. Listen,
You women. Though we are thus righted——
Sac. Humph!
Ste. In man's and Heaven's eye, we yet will bow
To your own wish in this. As once we gave
Your sighs the right of way, we now will ease
This second woe by taking swiftest means
To part this clucking pair.
Sac. You'll yield to *us*?
Arc. How like you, Sachinessa, this high place
Above the gods?
Sac. They shall be parted?
Ste. Ay,
We do consent.
Sac. Nay, you shall please yourselves.
For my own part, I will not break their bonds
And set their hearts a-bleeding.
Arc. No, nor I.
Ste. How now, vapidity?
Arc. I mean, my lord,
You have convinced me, and this marriage bond
Shall be as Zeus has made it.
Sac. Pelagon,
Your reason captures mine, and I repent
My mockery. This strange event 's no more
Uncouth, now you have pried the way for me
To wisdom's bed of truth. I clearly see
That man and woman of one mother born
May be no kin. The marriage shall stand.
Pel. In name of Zeus!
Arc. Yes, in his name.
Ste. Nay, wife,
We know your simple heart, and read its horror
Through this pretence so suddenly clapped on.
We shall reject a forced and sad submission——

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Pel. Ay, ay, we shall! I'll act at once, and stop
Their kisses, riveting a bond unblessed——
Sac. Unblessed?
Pel. My golden joy, I speak your thought
Not mine.
[*A clamor in street*]
Ste. They come for us.
Pel. I hear my name.
We'll out and greet them.
Ste. No, my friend.
Let them come in unnoted.
Pel. Ay, we'll sit
Withdrawn, in gentle argument. Here's shade.
[*They go aside. Enter Lysander, Agis, Creon, Menas, and a score of Spartans and Athenians*]
Lys. Is Stesilaus here? We must be heard.
Arc. He's here.
Menas. And Pelagon! Where's Pelagon?
Sac. His good ear's toward, sir.
Pel. [*Unable to keep aside*] Did I not hear
My name?
Sac. Why, so I said.
Agis. [*Advancing to Stesilaus*] My lord, we come——
Ste. What haste, good Agis? Goes the world so fast?
Agis. As fast as Fate can drive it, and you, my lord,
Are under foot.
Pel. [*Who has been listening to Menas*]
You hear it, Stesilaus!
Athens is ashes! We're betrayed, betrayed!
[*Biades, Pyrrha, Phania, Alcanor, and their companions swarm in, lower right*]
Ste. Silence, and let us hear! Now, Agis, speak.
Agis. And grieve that 'tis my part. The Spartans know
Your treachery——

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Ste. Who dares give such a name
To deed of mine?
Agis. Denial comes too far
Behind the proof, my lord.
Ste. The proof? What proof?
Lys. 'Tis known to all. The very curb cries out
That Pyrrha is Athenian born, the child
Of Pelagon.
Pyrr. Oh, Zeus!
Bia. Bear up, my Pyrrha!
Agis. Ay, Athens weds with Athens, and on that
You build the peace of Sparta! A bold deceit
Of yours and Pelagon's, whereby we're sold
To a foeman's pleasure!
A Spartan. Though the heart of Athens
Be in the knot that binds your traitorous bargain,
We'll cut it through!
Agis. Will you deny you changed
Your babes in cradle?
[*Silence*]
Bia. Pray you, who revealed
This ancient secret?
Menas. Creon came——
Bia. Ah, Creon!
Menas. Before the senate, then in seat to unfold
From rivalrous invention, topless honors
For these two lords, whose guilt had long devoured
Such labor's root and reason.
Bia. Creon came?
Menas. And bared the tale, made his by accident,
And swore you knew it too,—that Pyrrha there
Is Pelagon's daughter, and Phania is the child
Of Spartan Stesilaus.
Pha. Oh, oh, oh!
Alc. A rope for me then!

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Cre. [*To Biades*] Sir, I did not speak,
But trusted all to you, until the secret
Laid night on Phania's innocence and grew
Too foul to keep.
Pyrr. You knew this, Biades?
Bia. And knew you would forgive!
Pyrr. This was the spring
Of all your oaths! In my espousèd hand
You'd lay my country's peace, knowing her name
Was Attica! This was your proof of love.
The oilèd wedge that let you in my heart!
False in the trothal moment that should make
The foulest for an instant pure!
Bia. But hear——
Pyrr. Oh, in that hour which women wrap in rose
And hide where thoughts like guardian doves may go,
You set a cautel touching it with death
That leaves me treasureless!
Bia. My Pyrrha,——
Pyrr. Not yours!
Bia. Howe'er 'twas done, I won you!
Pyrr. Won a Spartan!
Now keep the shadow. As an Athenian maid
I do renounce you! [*Escapes him*]
Bia. Ah! Zeus loves the dice.
He's always at the game. But who'd have thought
This throw would be against me? Hear me, sweet!
[*To Stesilaus*]
Dear father, speak to her. She'll heed your voice,
Your judgment ripe, and words set out like cups
With wisdom's honey.
Pel. [*Awake to fathership*] Ay, my son, I will!
Bia. Not you, in name of hope! [*Follows Pyrrha*]
Alc. Monsters of fatherhood, how dare you show
Your faces in this sun? Go seek some cave

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Whose darkest den will not betray a shame
Of its own hue! No, Phania, do not cling
To my unwilling breast that now must be
A hedge of swords to your bird bosom. [*Holds her tightly*]
Pha. Oh!
Cre. Withdraw your hand, proud Spartan!
Alc. I will protect
My sister, sir, from any lord of Athens!
Sac. Look, Pelagon,—and Stesilaus,—here!
Look on this warbling joy hatched tenderly
In nest of your conceit, which you've kept warm
Forgetting you had hearts where love bechid
Sat in unfeathered cold. If you are fathers,
Drink of their ecstasy till every vein
Applauds it!
Lys. Pray you, peace! The Senators!
[*Enter Amentor and other Senators*]
Ste. What's your demand?
Amen. Your life, Lord Stesilaus.
And that of Pelagon, in Athens' name.
Pel. My life?
Amen. Not less will still this wind and save
Our homes from undefended sack. They've seized
The citadel——
Bia. Then on my armor! Wife
May whistle when the bugle calls!
Amen. Stay, sir!
The Spartans are in power, and any check
Means slaughter. There's no help. The Persian fleet
Has sailed. The Athenians drop their useless arms
And follow at command, knowing no way
To win but by a bloodless yielding.
Bia. Yield!
Amen. Sir, we must grant the Spartans these two lives,
Whereon they'll strike no further. So they swear.

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Sac. [*To Pelagon*] This is your downy Peace wooed from the clouds
To hover over Athens! Save the name!
She's from a briar-patch, not Heaven! Her wings
Are full of burrs!
Bia. [*Holding Pelagon*] Stand to! A scuttled ship
Has no choice deck. There's nothing to be saved
But dignity.
Pel. Nay, that's for Stesilaus! [*Breaking away*]
My life, my life!
[*Noise mounts without. The wall is broken through, rear, and the breach reveals the street filled with angry Spartans*]
Amen. Peace!
Gir. Give us Stesilaus!
Voices. And Pelagon! The traitors! Give them up!
Amen. You see them. There they stand.
[*Misses Pelagon*]
Where's Pelagon?
Voices. We have him here! Bring Stesilaus!
Arc. Hold!
I am Archippe. Let me speak.
Voices. No mercy!
Arc. I ask none, friends. The wife of Stesilaus
Is not so much in 's debt she owes him aught
On mercy's score.
Gir. Then speak.
Arc. Is Philon here?
The reverend priest?
Voices. He comes! Make way! He's here!
[*Philon comes out*]
Philon. Speak first, Archippe. I'll follow you.
Arc. My friends,
I'm such a one as you do most contemn,—
A woman disobedient to her lord.
But if you judgment give upon that point,

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Remember that my lord is Stesilaus.
When this my daughter here,—yes, Pyrrha, she,—
Child of my nurturing blood,——
Voices. What? What? Your child?
Amen. Silence! Speak on, Archippe.
Arc. When she lay
A morsel cradled, two months' breath in her,
Came he, the father, swearing she must go
To Sachinessa's breast, and I must take
Her Phania to my own,—thereby to serve
In some occulted way the future good
Of Greece. And all the mercy won from him
Was leave to journey with my child to Athens——
Sac. But I was not so meek! By Pallas, no!
What—who—was Pelagon, to rob my bosom
Of Hera's gift? Who made him greater than
The gods? 'Tis but a girl, he said, to me,
A mother! I went to Philon then, the priest
Whom Athens honors, and by holy counsel,
We did not change our babes, but let our deed
Wear face that pleased them, with a heart our own,
And home Archippe went with Pyrrha safe,
While I in Athens held my Phania close,
And they, fond sires, who knew no difference
Between a *girl* and *girl*, hugged their deep plan
And built the phantom of united Greece
Upon it.
Arc. If those ghostly towers, now fallen,
May rise again, it is our act, my lords,
Provides them nature's base, and not a dream's.
Condemn us, if you will, as erring wives,
But as true mothers give us softer justice.
And if there's scale or balance that can hold
Such torturous weight, lay on it all the pain
Of lonely years that saw me turn my face

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From my loved daughter, lest this man of rock
Should know her mine and his.
Pyrr. Your own, your own,
My mother!
Ste. So you slip me, dame,
And Pyrrha goes with you. But Biades
Is under thumb by this same turn. He now
Must know himself a Spartan, and shall keep
My terms.
Arc. Make them full easy. You shall lay
No marring hand upon our children's joy
As fell on mine.
Bia. O, sue for me, Archippe!
Give me my bride! Whatever be her race,
Her home is in my arms!
Arc. Forgive him, Pyrrha.
Not for his pleading, but for love I know
You bear him.
[*Pyrrha permits Biades to embrace her*]
Alc. [*To Phania*] Sweet, we know our heaven by
Those moments in a hell.
Amen. Here's feast enough!
Bia. But poor old Creon in this rain of porridge
Starves for a spoon.
Cre. And you, perforce, take one
Of Spartan make.
Bia. I'm caught. But in love's lap.
I'll swallow Sparta for so dear a bed.
Menas. And you need fear no distaff tyranny,
My lord. There you are safe. Although your bride
Be Hera-limbed, you've proved yourself her Zeus
In open match.
Cre. How if her movèd heart
Crept to her arm and slipped the victory
Unwon to love?
[*Biades is suddenly embarrassed*]

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Pyrr. [*With a caress of assurance*]
If that were so, my lords,
My pride would harbor his, and none should know
My secret.
Ste. Senators, and men of Athens,
Art dumb when justice waits on you for voice?
What censure have you for these rebel wives,
And this unsainted priest?
Amen. [*To Philon*] You counselled them
To their deceit?
Philon. I did.
Amen. You've no defence?
Philon. I need none.
Ste. Ha!
Philon. Whoso reveres the gods
Draws of their strength in every mortal inch,
And in this act I did them reverence,
Standing between their wish and meddling wits
Of these presumptive men. But pardon them.
For it is shame enough to 've thought to make
A frislet of their own shake like the locks
Of cloud-haired Zeus. For me, my hand is on
My altar, and I fear no fall.
Amen. No more,
Good Philon.
Philon. Ay, a word, This morning, sir,
I blessed the couple here, knowing them free
Of kindred blood,—Alcanor and his Phania.
The strands are doubly woven that now bind
Sparta and Athens. Pyrrha and Biades
Were first to link them one, and now this pair
Unites them o'er.
Amen. You hear, my Spartan friends.
What say you? Is it peace?
Spartans. Peace be to Athens!

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Amen. And peace to Sparta! Hearts and altars guard it!
Go, citizens! See that the chariots
Glow with new garlands for this double bridal.
And let the noble wives of these proud lords
Co-queen festivity. All shall rejoice
Save this convicted pair,—you, Pelagon,
And Stesilaus. You we prison here,
Your own sole company, nor shall you speak
Save in a rhyme now dim with little use,
But shall be better known from this day forth
With polish you shall give it. Hear it, sirs:

The man who would his own pie bake
Must from his wife ten fingers take.

[*Curtain falls and rises. Pelagon and Stesilaus are discovered, their backs to each other, the only occupants of the garden. Through the breach in the wall the festal procession is seen passing. Curtain*]

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KIDMIR

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

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CHARACTERS

OSWALD, *Earl of Clyffe*
BERTRAND, *sometime* VAIRDELAN, *his son*
CHARILUS, *a Greek*
ARDIA, *his daughter*
BIONDEL *and* VIGARD, *sons of Charilus*
BANISSAT, *Prince of Avesta*
PRINCE FREDERICK
BERENICE, *his daughter*
GAINA, *serving-woman to Ardia*
BARCA, *servant to Charilus*
RAMUNIN, *a headsman*
SEVEN MAIDENS, *friends of Ardia*

Followers of Banissat, soldiers of Oswald, nobles, wedding-guests, dancers, guards, &c.

TIME: *During the later Crusades*
PLACE: *The southern coast of Asia Minor*

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ACT I

SCENE: *A hall in the castle of Charilus on the heights of Kidmir. The open rear, through which is seen a sunset sky, leads to a parapet overlooking the city of Avesta and the coast of Suli. Entrances right and left of parapet. Midway down, right, the door to a chamber.*
Charilus stands on parapet and looks down toward Avesta. Barca waits within the hall.

Char. O, sea-washed city, must the hail of fire
Crimson thy milky walls, and salt winds strive
In vain to sweeten ditches dark with blood
From thy tapped heart? Come, Barca, be my eyes.
Who climbs the heights?
[*Barca advances and looks over*]
Barca. Lords Vigard and Biondel
Are on the pass.
Char. My sons so soon returned!
No other?
Barca. Farther down, my lord, I see
The knight, Sir Vairdelan.
Char. Then we shall hear
His sunset song.
Barca. The stairway through the cliff
Is closed. Shall I give signal, sir, to hoist
The upper gate?
Char. That is my charge henceforth. [*Going left*]
They will be hungered. [*Turns to Barca*]
Scant the board in nothing.
[*Exit left*]
[*Gaina enters, right, rear, carrying a tray piled with candles*]

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Gaina. Thank goodness, Barca, you're where you're wanted for once! Help me with these winkers. [*Giving him candles*] My mistress kept me out on the cliffs when I ought to 'a' been inside an hour ago doing my honest work. I got her in at last, but I had to be round with her, poor soul! I told her what!

Barca. [*Placing candles*] She was watching for her brothers?

Gaina. [*Puts tray down*] Brothers! It was a sight of that singing knight she wanted. He went down the pass this morning and she has gone about all day like a bird with a sore throat.

Barca. God gave her eyes, and Sir Vairdelan is good to see. When I look at him I feel somehow as if the sun were just up and everybody had another chance.

Gaina. A man who lets his sword rust at home while he goes about tootle-de-rooling on a flute! And she could be the princess of Avesta if she'd look in the right place. Well, if she had *my* eyes!

Barca. What! You would have your mistress marry Banissat? An unbeliever?

Gaina. A prince is a prince,—and I'd say the same if my mistress were my own daughter.

Barca. And you a Christian!

Gaina. A Christian of Corinth, I'd have you know. There are Christians and Christians, please you! And for my mistress, dear heart, it would take more than marrying a prince to send her to—to——

Barca. Let it out.

Gaina. Hell, then,—if you want to bite ginger. And who but Banissat can stand between her father and that English Oswald—who is just plain devil and not an Englishman at all——

Barca. Devil? A knight of the Cross leading the army of the Lord to Jerusalem.

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Gaina. Nobody but the devil, I tell you! And I wouldn't speak to him if I met him walking with Saint Peter, unless he showed me his bare feet with ten good toes on 'em. It might be all right for Peter, but a woman can't be too careful, and the master took me out of a good family in Corinth. And this Vairdelan who is no more a knight than I'm a lady—the next time he goes down the pass he will lose his way up again, or my head's a goose-egg, that's all!

Barca. Gently, Gaina. You were young once.

Gaina. Once? I've more hairs than wrinkles yet, which some can't say and tell the truth!

Barca. Tongue in! Here's the master. [*Moves right*]

Gaina. My candles!

[*Seizes tray and goes out, right, as Charilus re-enters left*]

Char. [*To Barca*] Look to the supper.

[*Exit Barca, right. Charilus crosses to parapet and looks down*]

Doubt-blown city, rest.
Sleep on my heart. You shall not bleed for me.

[*Enter Ardia from chamber midway right*]

Ard. Alone, my father?

Char. Never alone, and yet
My wish was calling thee. [*Sits, and draws her beside him*]

Ard. Ah, not one guard
About thee?

Char. The only guard is always near,—
A fearless heart.

Ard. Then I have none. My heart
Is made of fears.

Char. No charm but love will lift
Our gates of rock.

Ard. But who knows love from hate
In days like these? Some foe with friendship's eyes,
Some secret knife of Oswald's——

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Char. None may tread
The guarded pass save our knight Vairdelan
And your two brothers.
Ard. Vairdelan is late.
Why went he down?
Char. Knights true as he, my girl,
Are never questioned.
Ard. [*Starting*] Who are at the gates?
Char. Your brothers come.
Ard. So soon? That means good news
From Banissat. He'll be your strength against
This mighty Oswald.
Char. Fair his word may be,
But I go down the pass.
Ard. Go down? To meet
That fiend?
Char. The man who calls himself my foe,
But named of God my brother.
Ard. O, too much
Thou lovest love! A fiend, I say!
Char. That name
Give unto me when I consent to piece
This spun-out life with breath of babes and gasp
Of dying mothers. Would you feed these veins,
Gelid and old, all golden venture done,
With the warm waste of youth whose savèd stream
Might bear mankind unto the port of gods?
Ard. But you—you are my father!
Char. It is such cries
Unsettle justice till her shaken scales
Weigh nations 'gainst a heart.
Ard. Must I not love you?
Char. My Ardia, fair as though thou wert not mine,
Or wert all hers who made gray Corinth young,
The love that feeds behind a sheltered door

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Must be unroofed and take its bread of stars
Ere it may answer to its holy name.
The heart must build no walls——
Ard. I build them not,
But find them risen about me. You are here,
Guardful and best, fending my eyes,—there stands
My Biondel,—there Vigard brave,—and there. . . .
Char. And there, my daughter?
Ard. Hark! 'Tis Vairdelan's voice!
[*Singing heard below*]

O fires that build upon the sea
Till wave and foam of ye are part,
And burn in mated ecstasy,
Ye build again within my heart.

O clouds that breathe in flame and run
In linkèd dreams along the sky
In me the fire is never done,
Though Eve's gray hand soon puts ye by.

Christ be my Hand of Eve upon
The flame that tireless, fadeless leaps!
Haste holily, O Mary's moon,
With dew for fire that never sleeps!

[*Ardia keeps a listening attitude, not heeding the entrance of her brothers who come on left*]
Char. Well, sons?
Bion. Ay, well! That is the word we bring.
Avesta's prince, the gracious Banissat,
Is now your sworn defender.
Ard. [*Turning*] And asks no price?
Bion. No more than your fair self, my sister.
Vig. [*As Ardia stands silent*] You doubt?
'Tis true. He'll make you princess!

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Ard. He is old. . . . .
Bion. What call you old? He's in the fairest top
Of manhood.
Vig. Old!
Ard. And cannot sing. . . .
Vig. Not sing!
Ard. What need have we of him? Can Oswald scale
These rock-barred heights?
Vig. Starvation can.
Ard. We've food
Will last three harvest moons.
Bion. And Oswald camps
Where plain and sea will feed ten thousand men
As many years.
Vig. While here our skeletons
With bleachèd grin may watch the feast below!
Ard. To starve . . . is that so terrible? 'Tis but
One way of dying.
Vig. Dying?
Char. Say no more.
The morrow's dawn shall light my way to Oswald.
Bion. You'll go to him? Then death!
Vig. [*To Ardia*] See what you do?
Ard. Forgive me. [*Runs to her father and clings to him*]
Now! Bind me to Banissat.
Char. Nay, thou art free.
Bion. [*To Ardia*] Our lives shall thank you.
Vig. Thanks?
You speak her part.
[*Ardia leaves her father and moves to edge of parapet*]
Bion. [*Following her*] Dost know a better way?
Ard. I pray you, leave me.
Vig. Princess of Avesta!
Ard. Your supper waits.
Vig. [*Starting right*] Come, brother!

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Char. Though I've supped,
I'll sit with you, my sons. Discourse is ever
The best dish at the board.

Bion. We thank you, sir..

[*Exeunt Biondel, Vigard, Charilus, right*]

Ard. And am I wooed and won? Dreams of a dream,
Where are ye now? . . . . . A lover with no song.
No carols stealing sweetness from the moon;
No trembling hand to drop a morning rose
Where I may walk.

[*Takes a rose from her bosom and casts it away*]

No rose . . . . no Vairdelan!

[*Re-enter Gaina*]

Gaina. Here, mistress? Dearie dear, a-weeping?

Ard. No.

Gaina. Say you were, 'twere a better sight than this fetching of dry sighs. They 'most take the skin of a woe that a little tear-water would bring up easy enough.

Ard. O, Gaina, Gaina, did you see my mother buried?

Gaina. Ay, 'twas a sweet grave we laid her in over in Corinth. You'll never make as pretty a corpse, my dear.

Ard. Was I there?

Gaina. Troth, you were, and trouble enough you gave me. You wanted to climb into the coffin and go to sleep too, you said.

Ard. O, had you buried me with her I should not have seen this day!

Gaina. Most like you wouldn't. Come, honey dove, come to your room and brighten yourself a bit. There's the new veil just begging to be looked at. I'll put it on you, and——

Ard. No, I don't want you. [*Going, right*]

Gaina. O, ho, I can read his name you do want, and not kill a bird for it either.

Ard. [*Turning*] Who, magpie? Who?

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Gaina. Your eyes may save my tongue if they squint sou'west.

Ard. Is he coming?

Gaina. Who, my cuckoo? Who?

[*Bertrand enters left. Ardia starts off right*]

Ber. Ardia!

Ard. [*Weakly, pausing at her door*] Vairdelan. . . .

Ber. Will not you stay?

Ard. I will return. [*Exit*]

Ber. Your mistress is not well?

Gaina. You've eyes, sir.

Ber. This fear of Oswald——

Gaina. Her trouble's nearer home, sir.

Ber. Her father——

Gaina. Nay, it wears no beard, though it may in time.

Ber. What troubles her, dear Gaina?

Gaina. A man, my lord.

Ber. A man!

Gaina. There, don't feel for your sword, for that's at home, and I never heard yet of spitting a man with a flute, though it may e'en go to the heart of a woman if she be young and soft like my mistress.

Ber. The truth, Gaina!

Gaina. I can spare it, sir. My master's daughter is so in love with you——

Ber. Angels do not love!

Gaina. That may be. I'm speaking of my mistress, "Magpie!" Not meaning you, sir.

Ber. She can not love me!

Gaina. That's what I said—at first. A roaming creature with only his cloak for shelter, though it's a good gentleman's weave, I'll allow, and I know you'll go away before her poor heart gets too heavy for carrying. It's nigh that now, and before you came it was so light she was tripping and chirping till I could 'a' sworn she had no

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heart at all—just toes and wings. And now, dear soul,—but you'll go, sir? You know you'd have to hunt the door soon enough if her brothers got a breath of what's between you.

Ber. There's nothing between us!

Gaina. A bat could see it by daylight. It's been in your eyes all the time.

Ber. I never meant it!

Gaina. Shame to you then. You'll go, sir?

Ber. Yes, yes, yes!

Gaina. Here's my lady. Now don't tell her you're going. Just go.

Ber. Just . . . go.

Gaina. [*At right*] Ay, you've got it.

[*Exit Gaina as Ardia re-enters*]

Ard. My brothers are at supper. Will you join them,
Or do you fast?

Ber. I fast.

Ard. A stern religion
Is yours, my friend.

Ber. I've chosen it. Ardia,
You know me for a knight.

Ard. [*Softly*] Who wears no sword.

Ber. But in the English isle where I was born,
I was a monk . . . and true. True am I now,
Save that my cell is what men call the world.

Ard. Spare speech and me. I know the rest.

Ber. Your prayers
Then be my bond that Christ may search my heart
And find no part not his.

Ard. No prayer of mine
Shall fetter youth to bloodless vows. And you
Look not as one faith-leeched of life. Your cheek
Is sudden gray, not changeless pale. 'Tis hued
Like rebel morning pushing back a dawn

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Too eager for its peace. A monk. Our ways
Part as our souls. Know you I am to wed
Prince Banissat? So dumb?
My father comes!
[*Meets Charilus re-entering and leads him to a seat*]
Our guest was telling me of English days.
Now you change tongue with him and speak the tale
You promised yester night. Why does this Oswald,
This war-mad lord of England, on his way
To free the holy tomb, forget his path
And turn his army's strength against a man
No greater than thyself?
Char. Yes, you shall know.
Ard. At last!
Char. For morning parts us.
Ard. Oh! Not that!
Ber. Shall I go in, my lord?
Char. Nay, Vairdelan.
I'd have thee hear. Thou thinkest me a man
Of holy heart.
Ard. Ah, who does not?
Char. There's one
Has cause for doubt. 'Twas I who slew in rage
Earl Oswald's father.
Ard. You? These hands?
Char. These hands.
Ber. I've heard 'twas so.
Ard. You've heard?
Char. 'Tis thirty years
Since Oswald, with his father, John of Clyffe,
Marched in Red Giles' crusade. You know of that?
Ber. My grandsire captained there.
Char. I served not Christ,
At least as they, with pillage, fire and rape,
But there were some among the English youths

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Who took my heart, and Oswald was my choice
Of all who camped before the holy gates.
Ard. That man!
Char. I, too, was young . . . . and I was wed.
Not to my Ardia's mother, but to her
Whose heart yet boldly beats in my two sons.
In her strange beauty John of Clyffe found death.
He sought her, and I slew him. When his blood
Ran at my feet, I fled,—not from the swords
Hot on my path, but from that stream of blood.
Ard. Dear, dear my father! 'Twas a world ago!
Char. I was not of the many who can kill
And laugh again, nor yet of hermit-heart,
But for myself had made a gentle god
Whom my soul served.
Ber. I know, my lord, that sweet
Idolatry, and dream what thou didst suffer
So shaken from it.
Char. Far as man knows the world
I fled the scarlet stream that followed me,
And on the skyward slope of Himalay,
Between the white of snows and blue of heaven,
Saw it no more.
Ard. [*Kissing his hands*] O, white, forgiven hands!
Char. There, near to God as man may come nor lose
The body's mould, I saw in solvent thought
That knows not time, a sinless star,—this earth
That shall be. Back unto my world I came,
And that my dream might live I lived my dream,
Servant to love even where the slaves of hate
Whet sword and knife.
Ard. O, true!
Ber. 'Tis sung of thee!
Char. Now am I old, but love does not deny me
One service more. To-morrow I shall go
To die at Oswald's feet——

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Ber. [*Eagerly*] You will go down?
Ard. No, no! He shall not go! Prince Banissat
Will save him! He has promised!
Ber. [*Gazing at Ardia*] Banissat?
So 'twas a bargain. Thou 'rt fair goods to be
On th' vender's table. [*Turns to Charilus*]
You choose well, my lord.
Ard. What words!
Ber. I bring a message from th' earl.
Ard. From Oswald? [*Shrinking*] You know him?
Ber. If any man
May know him,—but I better know his son.
Ard. The vicious Bertrand?
Ber. Vicious?
Ard. O, so foul
He shuns the day, and walks on moonless nights
Most like his soul!
Ber. You speak of Bertrand?
Ard. Ay!
More wolfish than his father,—beast whose sword
Should be his body's part as tigers wear
Their claws from birth!
Ber. A bold delusion this!
Char. She speaks untempered rumor. Slander, sir,
Is out of breath with sporting Bertrand's name,
And giveth way to winds that blow it past
Belief's last border.
Ard. Slander?
Ber. What will shake
These fancies from your heart?
Ard. A miracle.
Naught less.
Ber. Hard terms. [*Turns to Charilus*]
I know this Bertrand well.
If any happy merit in myself

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Has won your love, bestow the same on him.
What I may share is his.

Char. Here's living hope!

Ber. He, like myself, was cloister-bred, and passed
Peaceful, uncounted days until the death
Of his three brothers, slain in one mad hour.
Earl Oswald then bethought him of the son
So early given to Christ. "I have no heir,"
He said, "but God lacks not for monks." And straight
With power and gold bought full release for Bertrand,
Save that release his soul and God might give.

Char. You make me love his story.

Ber. True to peace
Even in the camp of war, he lives withdrawn,
And so gives Rumor sweep for what she would,
While in her swollen report the earl conceals
His monkish son's true nature.

Char. I'll know this youth!

Ber. He keeps his tent by day, and steals at night
To forest glens, his armor but a cloak,
His sword a flute——

Ard. O, light from Heaven!

Ber. Sometimes
He farther goes, even far as Kidmir heights,
And at the feet of Charilus he learns
A love more true than fane and cloister taught,—
The love that made the houseless, barefoot Christ,
With open breast to all unbrothered woe,—
And now he kneels and of that gentlest love
Asks pardon.

Char. Bertrand, son of Oswald, rise.
There's no forgiving in the sinless star.

Ber. [*Rising, to Ardia*] And you?

Ard. Ah . . . when I've breath!

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Ber. What I have said,
My lord, makes way for what is yet to say.
To-day I waited by Avesta's gate
For this [*taking out paper*] my father's word, response to mine
Sent days ago to him. Here, sir, he says: [*Reads*]

"Son of my hope, your words are not more strange to me than these I write with my own hand. If Charilus will come to Suli Castle, the which my swords have taken while you sang and slept, my door shall open to him as Kidmir gates have opened unto you. By Christ, I swear the treatment that he gave my blood he shall have again from me. But if he come not down, then shall I reach him through Avesta's heart, and the love he now spurns will be cold in my sword. Despatch this, I pray you, for I would hasten to Jerusalem, leaving you my conquered princedom, whose head is Ilon and whose foot is the city of Ramoor. Thine as thy heart speaks, Oswald."

Char. Your father's hand?

Ber. Doubt flies from it, although
The vein is alien, sir. It is his hand,
And, I do think, his heart, wherein, my lord,
Your gentleness to me, like creeping rain,
Has moistened love's dry root, whose pent-up bloom
Is by that nurture freed, and magical
Now glows before us.

Char. This I would believe.
[*Starts off right*]
Vigard and Biondel must have this news
From my slow lips, lest with the sudden truth
They strike ablaze. They have their mother's fire.
Albanian Gartha was not one to die
And leave her sons no part in her wild race. [*Exit*]

Ber. You are not Gartha's daughter?

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Ard. No, my lord.
Claris of Corinth bore me, and my flame
Is joy, not anger. O, this miracle
You've wrought for me!
Ber. I wrought?
Ard. 'Tis no less strange
When God through his bare tool reveals his hand,
Than when invisible his power stirs
And makes a chasm in sense. So when you stood
Before me, Bertrand's self, with yet the voice,
The eyes, the heart of Vairdelan, I knew
That was my miracle. O Heaven-sign
At which my world grew blithe and shook May-boughs
With birds in every branch!
Ber. You've no more fear
For Charilus?
Ard. None, none.
Nor for myself.
Ber. Yourself?
Ard. O, seems no soul need trouble now
In this vast world!
[*Re-enter Charilus and sons*]
Bion. You are not Vairdelan?
Vig. You're Bertrand, Oswald's son?
Ber. 'Tis true.
Vig. That truth
Should cut your throat, and I could lend my sword
For such a matter.
Bion. Come! What knightly plea
Coats this deceit with honor?
Ber. None, my lord.
If I've made trespass deeper than your love
Will bear me out, my hope is in your pardon.
Bion. A lie made you our guest, and guest you are
Until we meet on Suli plain.

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Char. My son!
Ard. Call you that pardon, Biondel?
Bion. I speak
No pardon.
Ard. But you shall—you must. O, say it!
You know our father goes to Oswald.
Vig. Know
That fools and women talk! The gates are sealed.
Bion. I'll guard the pass against my father's self
If so much rudeness may make stand between
His death and life.
Char. My sons, I thank your love,
But I go down. The guards, the gates are mine,
And to my will they open.
Vig. 'Tis that girl,
That silvery Greek——
Char. If your quick blood must stir,
Let manners grace it.
Ard. O, my dearest brothers,
Do you not love me?
Bion. Better than you know.
We love you, serve you, though yourself obstruct
The way to safety.
Vig. You would trust the man
Who wrapped him in a lie to enter here?
Sat at our father's board and brake his bread
To feed an enemy?
Ber. The bread I brake
Fed friendship's heart in me, and made this roof
A temple. Do you not know me, Vigard?
Vig. Nay,
I knew a Vairdelan—you are not he.
Bion. If Oswald means no harm to Charilus,
Let him pass on. Jerusalem awaits
His savage sword.

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Char. My son, that Oswald thus
Compels me to him is to me but proof
That hearts may greet above long years of hate.
In this I see Love beckoning Man across
The wastrel lands of war to fields unwet
With blood, to days——
Vig. Unhearted cowards then!
Praise Allah, we yet live where rapiers thresh
The fields of men and leave the bravest standing!
Is 't not the Prophet's word that Paradise
Lies 'neath the shade of swords?
Char. Allah be yours!
But I would walk beneath unrisen stars,
Beyond hate's eyeless clouds——
Bion. O, spare us, sir!
Each day brings its own sun, and by that light,
No other, men must walk. If this our time
Be dark to you, 'tis in your vision, not
In the lit heavens, from whose shoreless depth
No hook of prayer or prophecy may draw
One star before its hour. Pray you be done
With this moon madness. Banissat will meet
The force of Oswald. With the morn he comes
To seal his troth with Ardia——
Char. By no word
Of mine. If you have given him pledge, your honor
Shall dip to dust and drudge your forfeit out,
Ere virgin bondage pay it. Hark, Biondel,
And hear me, Vigard! I alone shall meet
Earl Oswald. If the blood I shed yet cries
For blood, here are the veins shall make it dumb.
Bion. But, sir,——
Char. No more. Your sister stays with you.
Regard her will, nor ope these doors unbidden
To Banissat.

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Ard. I stay? O, never think
I shall not go with thee!
Char. You go?
Ard. I'm safe
With thee, my father. Here . . . . . .
Vig. Here you have brothers!
Ard. I mean no slight upon you, but my fate
Keeps with my father.
Char. I should doubt the God
Who bids me go if I denied you this.
Thyself art Peace, and where thou goest moves
Her radiance. Make you ready. And good-night, all!
Sir Bertrand, know the sleep that fits the heart
For journeying. [*Exit right, rear*]
Vig. [*To Ardia*] There's one will stop your way—
Prince Banissat!
Bion. We'll send him word this hour,
For while the edge be on his sudden love
He'll thank us to be swift.
Ber. You loved me once,
My lords.
Bion. True, son of Oswald.
Ber. Though you used
Some bitter words, I know your inmost heart
Holds me a man undoubted. There I'm stamped
In honor's verity; and when I vow,
By my soul's faith, that Charilus is safe,
You know 'tis truth.
Bion. Be you our father's hostage,
If this mad thing must be. Stay you with us,
And we are silent.
Ard. Stay? You ask too much.
Vig. No fear, soft sister. Mark him. We're refused.
He'll stuff the air with words, not clear it with
One pinch of proof.

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Ber. My lords, were I to stay,
'Twould make an act of faith lose point and purpose,
And blazon doubt before my father's face.
Vig. You mark?
Ber. 'Twould louder cry of war; uproot
Love's seedling in its tenderest hour, and make
Once more the bane and night-weed spring. But hear
An oath of mine. If Charilus meet harm
In Oswald's camp, I shall return and ask
The same stroke from your hands.
Ard. O, do not swear!
Ber. By every hope I have to enter Heaven,
By the right hand of God, by this white cross
That knew my mother's last, death-holy kiss,
By every sacred thing I know and love,
If Charilus comes up these heights no more,
Here shall I lay my life beneath your sword.

[*Barca re-enters right*]

Barca. [*To Bertrand*] The master asks a word with you, my lord.

[*Exit Bertrand with Barca*]

Ard. Will you accept his oath?
Vig. Go to your room.
Bion. We'll talk alone.
Ard. Nay, hear me first. You think
To force me to the arms of Banissat.
Give over that wild thought.
Bion. 'Twas not so wild
An hour ago.
Ard. Fate lifts the hand that laid
Compulsion on me. I am free. O, free!
No strait of life or death can make me less
Than mistress of myself.
Bion. Our destiny
Is bound with Banissat. Make him our foe,
And where shall we find peace? Not on these peaks.

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Ard. Is he our jailer then? This Banissat?
Our prison his good favor? Nay, the world
Has many roads, and courage even yet
May blaze a new one.
Bion. Rooted life is best.
I am not one to make my bed on winds,
Or stroll the earth for fortune's grudgèd scraps
Snatched from a rapier's point.
Ard. Know this. My hand
Shall never lie in Banissat's. Give up
A hope so barren. There's better pasturage
For wits so bold as yours. Now Oswald holds
The breadth of Suli plain, the heights of Tor,
Winged by the sea from Ilon to Ramoor—
A principality whose circuit leaves
Avesta as a fly pinned to a wall.
Vig. What's Oswald's fief to us? We are no sons of his.
Ard. Lord Bertrand holds the princedom here
While Oswald goes to wars in Palestine.
Bion. He told you this?
Ard. Did you not read as much
In Oswald's letter? There 'twas plainly said.
Bion. Still is our surest hope with Banissat.
Ard. When Bertrand is your friend? O, more than friend!
A brother!
Bion. Ah . . . . . do you say "brother"?
Ard. True
As though he had been born our father's son!
Bion. [*To Vigard*] You hear?
Vig. With more than ears.
Bion. We have been blind.
Vig. A brother!
Bion. All is clear enough, now that
We've eyes for it. Your pardon, sister.

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Ard. Pardon?
Bion. Pray you! We thought your scorn of Banissat
Marked you of creeping spirit, when your aim
Shot o'er our lowered eyes.
Vig. Ay, she has sped
Before our boldest care of her, and left
Our duty lurching.
Ard. These are drunken words.
Vig. If you would wed Lord Bertrand,——
Ard. O, you think. . . . . .
Bion. Your hope has shown its wing. Best bid it fly.
Vig. Speak without fear. This changes all.
Ard. You mean
You'll not delay us? You will let us go?
Vig. And speed you too! High stroke, this anxious hour
To journey in his care!
Bion. Yet shielded by
Our father's dignity.
Ard. How you mistake!
He does not woo me!
Vig. Now the modest foot!
But we have seen the other. Trust us, sister.
Bion. Mistake? I now recall his looks, his sighs,
As from a love immured,—his songs, too warm
For piety's cool breath,—and more that tends
To happy proof.
Vig. How dare he woo thee when
Mere Vairdelan? This blade had stood between!
Bion. Such beggar suit would then have cheapened thee
Beneath a prince's wearing. [*Leading her to door, right*]
No drooping now!
The way lies clear.
Ard. O, brother——
Bion. Get you in.
Ard. Will you not listen?

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Bion. Leave your hope with us,
Your secret is our own. [*Closes door upon her*]
Vig. Here's change of sky.
You trust Lord Bertrand?
Bion. That is now our course.
Our father will go down.
Vig. What's in your heart?
I'll open mine.
Bion. I beg you do.
Vig. Ramoor
And Ilon now are crownless. Suli's prince
Must have new governors.
Bion. But Christian ones.
That bars our way.
Vig. The Prophet's cloak fits well
With any fortune.
Bion. Ah. . . . . .
Vig. We've but to change
The color, not the cut.
Bion. [*Listening*] He comes!
Vig. We'll speak.
Bion. Not yet, my Vigard. Let this fruiting hope
Swell to a golden fall. Wait with the sun.
No green and forward plucking.
[*Re-enter Ardia*]
Ard. Hear me, brothers——
Bion. Not now. The prince!
[*Re-enter Bertrand, right*]
Ber. I pray your answer, friends.
Let us go down unhindered, and my oath
I leave with you, a hostage sure as though
With iron bonds you held my breathing form;
For in that oath I leave no treasure less
Than honor, knighthood, and what in me moves
Deathless to God.

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Bion. It is enough. Our guest
Is free.
Ber. Once more my brothers!
Bion. Know us ever
By that dear name.
Vig. And this deep oath you take
For Charilus' sake, is sworn too for our sister?
Ber. For Ardia? No, my lord.
Vig. Do you say no?
Ber. I must so answer you. For the fell harm
That touches her would of myself make end.
My honor so impeached would cease to breathe
The air itself made foul. I could not come
Having no life to bring me.
Bion. We believe you.
Go with our father. Take our sister too.
And we upon these heights shall pray, as you
On Suli plain, that Charilus may see
His sons again.
Ber. Come, let him know! This wished
Obedience will give him sleep.
[*Exeunt Bertrand, Vigard, and Biondel, right rear*]
Ard. Is 't best
That Truth be dumb? I'll watch this weaving Fate,
And feed her web with silence. . . . . Oh, with hope!

[*Curtain*]

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ACT II

SCENE 1. *A hall in the castle of Suli. Heavy doors open left, half-way up. Large window with iron grating, rear. Couches, chairs, scattered. Tables from which servants are removing the remnants of a feast. They are quarrelling, chaffing, singing, as the curtain rises.*

First Ser. Shifty, there!

Second Ser. What, can't a soldier eat?

First Ser. You a soldier, lickspoon?

Second Ser. I've drawn a sword, sir!

First Ser. Ay, and cut a cheese.

Third Ser. [*Lifting flask*] Here's to——

Fourth Ser. [*Seizing flask*] No man shall guzzle my master's wine before me. [*Drains vessel*]

Third Ser. [*Sadly, turning up empty flask*] Not after you, either.

Fifth Ser. Well, well, and two moons back we were saying grace over ditch-water!

Sixth Ser. Ay, we were good Christians then. A full stomach makes lean prayers. Now we've such a plenty we can spare the devil a fillip, and never a grace for it.

First Ser. [*Tugging at table*] Take a leg there! This is no grasshopper. [*Others help him move table to wall, right*] Look about you! The maskers will be in here.

Second Ser. Here? They'll be everywhere to-night. Such a jig-making over the new prince!

Second Ser. Not a corner to drop into and sleep off a good supper with a clear conscience!

Sixth Ser. Sleep? What have we to do with sleep? We fight, we eat, we dance. That's my soldier!

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Second Ser. We kill, we cut, we caper! [*Sings*]
The soldier rides on Fortune's wheel,
All. Round we go,
Round we go!
Second Ser. Now up the head and now the heel,
All. Round we go,
Round——

[*Enter seventh servant*]

Seventh Ser. Quiet, you devils! The master's coming.

Second Ser. What, can't a soldier sing? Haven't we fought like true men? When did we give quarter? When did we show mercy? And now can't we be happy? Can't we take breath?

Seventh Ser. Sh! and I'll tell you what I've seen. I've seen the daughter of Old Wisdom.

Sixth Ser. He get a daughter!

Seventh Ser. The maid of Kidmir. Ardia of the Stars they call her, but if the sun could shine in the middle of a dark night she would be like that.

First Ser. Foh, the Lady Berenice will put out her candle.

Seventh Ser. The Lady Berenice is as like her as the back of my hand to Juno's cheek!

First Ser. A heathen comparison! There's a Christian blow for it!

[*They scuffle. Enter Oswald in talk with Bertrand. Servants finish their work quietly and go out*]

Osw. My heart is whole again, now you've escaped
The claws of Kidmir.
Ber. Say the arms that closed
Like God's around me!
Osw. Fox, and lion too.
That's Charilus. I knew him young,—when blood
Tells nature's truth,—ere he had sucked
Philosophy's pale milk and made his truce

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With prudence and long life. The heart then his
He carries now——
Ber. Then, sir, you must have known
The Maker's marvel,—youth that outstripped age
And grayest saints in virtue.
Osw. Tut! No matter.
You're safe. And he is here . . . . . within these walls.
Ber. A guest of faith who holds your honor bound
High hostage for his life.
Osw. My honor? Trust me!
I'll care for that. No more I'll blush to lift
My shield i' the sun. The spot of thirty years
Shall be wiped out.
Ber. With love, my father?
Osw. [*After a pause*] Ay,
'Tis love shall do it.
Ber. [*Lifting his father's hand to his lips*]
You bind my heart to you.
Osw. Too soft, my warrior. Keep such woman's play
For Berenice. She will thank you for it.
I'm rough and old, and need the soldier clap
To start the singing blood. [*Clapping Bertrand*]
A blow with good
Red heart in 't!
Ber. Berenice?
Osw. Ah, that takes you!
She's here at last. Prince Frederick arrived
Three days ago, and with him his fair daughter,
Too dear of value to be left behind,
The prey of quarrelling kings. You'll dance with her
To-night.
Ber. You'll pardon me. I shall not dance.
Osw. Faugh, there's the monk again! Why, boy, we'll
pray
The better for a little tripping,—fight

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The better too. One dance with Berenice!
A beauty, sir, who makes me hate the years
That lie 'tween youth and me. She was to wed
A son of mine by vow above her cradle,
And I have buried every son save you.

Ber. May I not keep one vow?

Osw. The pope long since
Released you. Now——

Ber. My compact was with Christ.

Osw. Why cling to one when all the rest are broken?

Ber. It is the one lies wholly in my choice.

Osw. You left your cell.

Ber. Do you forget 'twas you
Who shook to ground my cloister walls, and locked
All holy doors against me?

Osw. True, I did it.
And with good warrant. Broadest Christendom
Upheld my right and gave me back my heir.
Small gain if you refuse to wed. My need
Is not for sons but grandsons now. My boy,
You'll let me see your children at my knee?
Ho, hide your face? Then there's a heart in you.
Why should I toil through blood and groans and fire
To make a name my shroud will wrap with me?

Ber. Toil then to give this land to God, and live
So long as love shall live in men.

Osw. Pale fame!
Have you no blood of mine? How could my fire
Father this sluggish monk? There was a maid
On Kidnir, Charilus' daughter, who has come
In wag of him, which speaks a fearless wench,—
She taught you nothing in those moons you passed
Upon her peaks?

Ber. Sir?

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Osw. When I saw her face
Flash from her veil, I could have sworn
Your vow was drowned in her lake-eyes, and that
Her captured softness had made easy way
For royal Berenice. Now you talk
Out of your cowl——
Ber. Not so! I am a knight!
Your words have made me one! Now could I draw
This sword that knows not blood——
Osw. I'll bout with thee
For any woman. Come! Thou'lt be a man
Ere long. Come, sir!
Ber. You've set a foot most foul
Upon the flower of time!
Osw. It seems I've hit
The mark i' the very eye.
Ber. The whitest thought
That holds her first must shrive itself!
Osw. So, so!
Come, end the song. She's yours. 'Tis not the moon
You cry for, take an old man's word.
Ber. The moon
Were nearer to me!
Osw. Trrr-rrr-rr!
Ber. My lord?
Osw. A woman. Ask and have. I'll send her here.
This is the hour to bait you, and I'd not lose it
For half of Suli.
Ber. Stay! I will not see her.
I dare not look upon her lest I lose
Christ and myself.
Osw. Are you so tuned? We'll have
A wedding yet.
Ber. Forget that word, and I
Forgive you for it.

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Osw. A wedding, prince of Suli.
This plain shall ring to Antioch.
Ber. Nay, father,—
And yet I thank you that your heart would make
So fair a maid my bride.
Osw. Fair? That's no word.
She's glory's darling pearl,—the morning's eye
That makes the night forgot! When you have seen her——
Ber. When I have seen her?
Osw. Ay,——
Ber. Do you not speak
Of Ardia?
Osw. Ardia! Gods! Wed Kidmir's trull?
Make me a doting grandsire to the heir
Of Charilus? Hear it, stars! Am I the fool
O' the earth? Give up my English forests, bare
My purse for troops, and foot by foot fight way
To Suli sands,—all this that I may set
A droning dotard's line upon a throne,
And be the ass of chronicle? O, poison!
Well, well, I'm done. The girl is fair enough.
And you shall have her if she pleases you.
But Berenice—there's your bride, my boy!
Ber. Wed Berenice? With that name you save me.
By that I see the darkness coiling deep
Along my bridal way. 'Twas Ardia's name
That lit the path till I dared let my eyes,
Though not my will, go venturing on 't.
Osw. My son,——
Ber. Never again, my father, speak to me
In this night's strain. Till morning I shall pray.
And then I fast. Good-night.
Osw. One moment. One!
The sunrise feast? Will you not be with us?
I drink with Charilus the cup of peace.

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Ber. And love that breaks no peace?
Osw. [*Assenting*] See how you bend me?
All that you ask I give, but you to me
Yield nothing.
Ber. Sir, this sword, my knightly suit,
And princely title, make denial for me.
Osw. Your pardon. I forget you count it much
To give a crust and cell for this broad kingdom.
I who have paid my heart out for a crown
Must thank you now to wear it.
Ber. Good-night.
Osw. O, son,
Have you no patience with a man grown old
In many battles? Now feel I my age,
Knowing the dearest blows of my long life
Have bought me but this shadow. In you is drained
Ambition's heart,—my every burning aim
Fails here in you, and cools unforged, unshapen.
Yet do you turn from me as though 'twere I
Not you who gave the wound that parts us.
Ber. I?
Osw. Of all my sons I loved you best. You think
I gave you to the friars with no twinge
Here at my heart? Your mother said "One son
We must return to God," and I said "Yea,
So it be not my Bertrand." But her will
Ran 'gainst me. When she had her way, I longed
Through many a day to have you at my side,
While you were happy with your songs and saints,
Your father quite forgot.
Ber. [*Stirred*] Nay, not forgot.
And I am with you now.
Osw. O, let me feel
My son is mine! I'll yield you anything.
Ay, even Ardia! She shall be my daughter——

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Ber. By heaven that keeps me true, I will not hear
That name again! There's maddest music in it.
I see her when I hear it. [*Covering his eyes*]
Osw. [*Aside*] I see the lime
Will catch you.
Ber. Again, good-night.
Osw. One favor, son.
And slight too, by 'r lady!
Ber. Speak it, sir.
Osw. I gave my word you'd wait on Berenice.
I' faith, I know not what excuse to make
To Frederick. 'Tis barest courtesy
To give her greeting.
Ber. I will welcome her,
Our guest.
Osw. Enough! [*Going*] You'll wait us here?
Ber. I'll wait.
[*Exit Oswald. Bertrand sits with head bowed and does not heed maskers who enter and dance about him. They cover him with their garlands as they go off. A song is heard within*]

What save winds shall kiss his bones
Bleaching on the desert stones?
What but waves o'er him shall sigh
Who doth drownèd sea-deep lie?
What save worms to him shall come
Locked in earth, bound, keyless, dumb?

Wild the wind and cold the wave,
Sharp the tooth within the grave!
Be such kisses for my ghost,
Heart, my Heart, when thou art lost!
Love me, Love, an hour and we
Mock the cold eternity!

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Ber. [*Taking up a flower*] Eternity in this?
[*Ardia enters. He does not see her until she speaks*]
Ard. Prince Bertrand?
Ber. [*Rising*] You?
Not Berenice!
Ard. Ah . . . . you wait for her?
Ber. Who brought you here?
Ard. The earl. Your father.
Ber. He!
What said he?
Ard. That you prayed to see me, sir.
Ber. O, faithless! He deceived you.
Ard. I will go.
Ber. Stay—tell me—how you fare.
Ard. Nay, you await
The princess.
Ber. You've all comfort? No least lack?
Ard. I've food and bed, but little company.
Ber. My father's plans press hard, and I'm a part
Of them. Each hour he calls me.
Ard. I know, my lord,
This is not Kidmir. I've my father too.
You've yours . . . . . and Berenice.
Ber. Nay, it seems
Fate hath her changelings. You have come, not she.
Ard. I sought no meeting, sir, but being here,
I'll ask you of my father. Is he safe?
Earl Oswald means no treachery to his guest?
Ber. At sunrise he will drink the cup of peace.
Ard. That's hours away! He knows your life is pledged
For Charilus' safety?
Ber. No. I will not wake
A doubt against his honor.
Ard. He should know.
I've seen his eyes. Good hap, you have your mother's.

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Ber. If he be vile as you so fear he is,
My pledge would be no leash to his bold will.
He'd chain me here till he destroyed your brothers.
Let him know naught, I'm free to keep my oath.
But this should not be spoken. We do wrong
To talk of things that have no being save
In our own midnight fears.
Ard. Well, I shall sleep.
Good-night, my lord.
Ber. Am I not Vairdelan?
Ard. Ay, when you smile so.
[*Holds out her hands, and drops them untouched*]
Far, O far from Kidmir!
Ber. Yea, an eternal journey my lost soul
May find it. Ardia, counsel me. Two ways
Stretch long before me, and I faint
In daring either. Give me of your strength.
Ard. My strength? I have none.
Ber. You have God's.
Men, proud in valor, stray and lose his hand;
The woman holds it ever, walking floods
And trampling fire where men go down.
Ard. Tell me!
How may I help you?
Ber. Sit then. I will speak.
[*She sits; he stands near her*]
I have agreed to be the sovereign
Of sword-won Suli.
Ard. None will better serve
Where he is master. O, this spear-torn land
Shall flower to heaven and mate her bloom with stars!
Ber. A bloom that dies with me?
Ard. Death cannot make
The spirit barren.

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Ber. [*At distance*] Through me my father hopes
To found a princely house o'er-topping Asia
With Christ-lit towers.
Ard. Oh! . . . . Then you will wed.
Ber. [*His eyes down*] My bride is chosen.
Ard. [*Rising*] Chosen? [*Sits again*]
Nay . . . . I know . . . .
Ber. [*Returning*] Your hidden eyes hide not the loathing there
For me forsworn. Why have I troubled you?
Look on me, Ardia. I am not yet fallen.
I take your answer. You have chosen my way,
And I set forth upon it—*not* forsworn.
Ard. That word is naught. I do not think of it.
Ber. Must man not keep his pledge?
Ard. To mortals, yes.
For so our lives are knit, and part to part
Keep sound and whole. But pledges unto God
Man cannot make or keep till he may bind
The Will that journeys with the launchèd world.
So might His rivers say "Here will we rest,
And worship thee," nor run into the sea,
And God must be content though all his fields
Burn waterless. So might the winds vow Him
Unbroken calm, and God who needs his storms
Must still his own desire while his dear earth
Goes pestilent.
Ber. Unsentient things! He shares
His will with man.
Ard. But not to enslave his own.
Christ seals no bond the lips lay on the soul
That is each instant new as life, as change,
As the importuning world. Ah, he who sells
To one hour's narrow need the zenith light
Of unborn days would snuff out time and know

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No rising sun. Himself would be a slavedom
Where never Christ would walk.
Ber. Is 't Ardia speaks?
Ard. Truth speaks, not I. If man must vow,
Let it not be to love no woman,—wear
The vest of fire, and in a sunless cell
Chain Heaven-arteried life,—then peering out,
Cling to the nested eaves transfixed to see
His fled desires wear the horizon flame.
But let him vow his Christ shall shrink no vein
Of broad and pauseless being; ay,—shall keep
Sweet surgence with his blood, climb with his spirit
Time's lifting hills, and hold in watch with him
The unshrouding pinnacles where love puts off
The old clouds for the dawn. Forsworn? O, heart
Cell-bound, thy very vows deny thy Christ.
Who serve him wear no chains.
Ber. You think me true?
And yet I felt your wounded, doubting eyes
Raining me scorn. Why was it, Ardia?
Ard. Scorn?
I have forgot why 'twas—or shall forget.
Ber. And there was pity too, that dropped your lids,
And would have sheltered me. Is that forgot?
Ard. Nay, that . . . . . I'll tell you that. I thought
of Love,
Man's angel, and the heart-lone way of him
Who missed and found her not. Never to take
More courage from the fall of her sure feet
On heights that wind between death and the stars;
Or where his road burns through the shadeless sands,
Reach for the hand with fountains in its touch
And feel the palm-breath round him. Not to know
Her eyes when night is come, and there's no star;
Her breast, that pillowing the darkened waste,

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Keeps warm the bitten earth and gives him dream
To meet and match the dawn. So wept my thoughts,
Forgetting that you are no wanderer,
But kingly housed will rule a tamèd realm.
Or should a harvest come of spears, not grain,
Yet is your princess brave and beautiful,
And bears, may be, a mating heart. Love then
Will come to you——

Ber. My princess?

Ard. Berenice.
Your father's choice . . . . . and yours.

Ber. My Ardia! Mine!
Could such a lie creep to your soul and find
No lances at the door? [*Kneels, kissing her hands*]
My love, my love, my love!
Let honors fail, and stars forget my name,
'Tis thou shalt walk beside me, thou my chosen!
I'll hear thy footfall on the winter steep,
And take thy hand where desert noons are white,
But close thy breast shall lie upon my heart,
Nor pillow the bitten waste, my own, my own!
[*She moves from him. He rises*]
Why are you silent, pale, and heaven-still?

Ard. I must be still. I've mourned my heart-walls thin.
This joy will break them. Joy to hear your voice
With love's mate-music in it cry to me.
My joy! I'll drink it all, nor lose one drop,
For I shall have no more.

Ber. No more? No less
Than life can hold!

Ard. Hear me, my lord.

Ber. You love me!

Ard. I shall not be your wife.

Ber. You're mine—all mine!

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Ard. You hold your vow yet sacred, breaking it
By the sole might of love. You do not feel
The vision round you in whose light that vow
Falls like a grave-cloth from an angel's limbs.
Ah, Christ would be no bridal guest of ours,
Shut out by your heart's fear.

[*He stands as if stricken*]

You see 'tis true.
You listen for his sanction, and you hear
The ring of your own vow.

[*He sits bowed*]

You hear it now
Above your passion's chime. 'Twill fill the air
When love's mad bells grow quiet, and your soul
Asks the old question. Let me then be far
From thee, nor stay to be a claspèd fire
Eating thy side.

Ber. You'll heal me of my fear.

[*Reaching his hands to her*]

My fountain and my palm!

Ard. Your doubt would stir
Beneath your tenderest deep. My nearing step
Would as a trumpet start its buried storm
To sweep our meeting eyes.

Ber. If Christ would give
A sign,—leave me no choice,—no other way

Ard. The torch of Fate but blinds us when the heart
Beareth no light.

Ber. Not Fate, but Heaven—there
I'd read my sign.

Ard. Hope not, my lord, that Heaven
Will drive me to your arms. Farewell.

Ber. No, no!
To keep you I'll dare hell——

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Ard. Dare hell? My love
Walks not that fiery verge, but waits thine own
In regions nearer God. There we shall meet,
And there will be no hell.
[*Turns to go, but is drawn back by his grief*]
Thou art a prince
Of Christ. Arise and rule this land for him.
There is no sin in you. You've kissed my hands,
And they are bright as stars!
Ber. O, can you go?
You do not love me. In your breast are wings—
No heart, but wings that seek the mountain sky.
Go perch above me, leave me dying here.
And cool your bosom with a virgin song
To mateless heaven!
Ard. Who is cruel now?
You have the world to feed on, need not eat
Your heart as I must—I, the woman. Dear,
Where Kidmir cliffs climb highest to the sky
I'll keep my watch, but thou shalt rise above me
In thought of men. O'er all discerning shall
Thy purpose wing, perhaps be drunk of clouds,
But light shall follow where thine aim has sped,
And leading upward with your comrade world,
My Kidmir shall seem lowly, where I walk
With stintless ache beneath the cedar boughs
On pain's moon nights. And oh, the Springs to pass,
When each bride-bud shall be a wound to me,
When grasses young, and softly pushing moss,
Shall urge my feet like fire, and I must stand
Quite still . . . quite still . . . with all my unborn babes
Dead in my heart.
Ber. [*Motionless*] You dare not leave me now.
You dare not, Ardia.

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Ard. I dare not stay.

[*As she nears the great doors they rumble shut and are noisily barred without*]

Ard. Ho! Open, open, open! I pray you, open!

[*Beats on door, then leans to the silence*]

Shut in . . . shut in! So Oswald's treachery
Begins with me. My father, we are lost.
You are to die, and I—to-morrow, oh,
My honor will go wasting on the fields
With every soldier's breath! You hear, my lord?
We are shut in . . .

Ber. The miracle!

Ard. Together. . .

Ber. The sign! the sign!

Ard. For all the night. . .

Ber. For all
Eternity! There is no other way.
I take you as from Christ. My bride, my bride!

[*Curtain*]

SCENE 2. *The same. Gray of morning seen through grating of window, rear, where Bertrand stands looking out and upward. Ardia is sleeping on a couch. The dawn-light wakes her and she starts up.*

Ard. 'Tis morning. Bertrand! You have watched all night?

Ber. O, there has been no night.

Ard. I slept it through.

Ber. Thy body slept, but thou hast been with me
O'er all the world, and farther than the world,
Out where the life begins.

Ard. That may be true,
For I had wondrous dreams.

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Ber. You speak of dreams?
A magic touched me, and I woke from dream
Knowing my life. What ways we went! All things
Seemed new, warm with the Maker's hand, as young
As our own eyes, but 'twas eternity
That kept them sweet, unaging.
Ard. It was Love
Who gave thee eyes to see the world immortal
Even in our own.
Ber. Do all Love's votaries
Walk with such magic sight?
Ard. In truth! I've seen
A beggar woman tread the road-side dust
As it were showered gold, because she had
Love's eyes. And we—what joys our joy shall find!
The pearling skies with rose-breath drinking ours
'Tween sea and dawn! The leaves that turn i' the wind
And tremble in our hearts—the brook-song that
Began beyond the stars—the woodland nests,
Breast-warm——
Ber. And one is ours.
Ard. The lark that leaves
His meadow-mate and reels at the sun's door
Dropping his song of fire and clover-dew
Down to her heart.
Ber. [*Kissing her*] As this in thine!
Ard. And all
Life's dearer-veinèd joys,—the way-side hands
That pluck to camp-fire glow,—the smile of age,
Gift-sweet and wise beside the garner door——
Ber. Ay, dear are these . . . . but when we came again
From that far, holy place . . . .
Ard. Ah, in your dream.
Ber. Where no words go or come . . . .
Ard. When we came back?

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Ber. Walking the light between the parted stars,
And met the days that knew us . . . . . naught could hide
The eternal joy within it. 'Twas a world
Whose beauty lay allwheres. O, not alone
In morning skies and mated larks a-wing!
Each rag-hung thing was dipped in chosen time
And wore its royal hour.
Ard. If that could be!
Ber. What seers, what eyes of light, outshone the pain
That gave them being! Tears that silvered graves
Globed in their pearl the immortal hope of men,
And seemed as beautiful as prophecy
Burning in its own truth. Ay, where a man
Fell murdered, crying "I forgive," the ground
Sprang as a garden——
Ard. Murdered? O, not that!
How could you say it? I had forgot, forgot!
Love in your dream looked you quite through the soul
Of Time on things to be? What saw you then?
Ah, tell me!
Ber. Then? . . Then came this dimmer light
Which you called morning, and I saw no more.
Ard. I would I knew!
Ber. You fear even now?
Ard. O, me!
Ber. Sweet, leave these shadows—dreams of ancient night
That cling too late upon a day-warm world.
Must I persuade you still that Oswald means
Our happiness?
Ard. Hark you! They come, my lord.
Ber. The sunrise feast. Fit place and time to break
The fast of love.
Ard. O, hear! So many feet!

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Ber. Dear trembler, do not fear.
Ard. They're here, my lord.
Ber. Welcome the world. It has no eye can make
Our own seek earth.
[*Doors open. Enter Frederick, Oswald, Charilus, Berenice, with lords and ladies attending. Servants follow bearing trays, and lay the table. Ardia hastens to her father and they talk apart. Oswald advances to Bertrand, right, the others lingering left*]
Osw. I am forgiven?
Ber. Forgiven!
Ask God and Love! I'll thank you all my life
That you did force me take my only way
To Heaven.
Osw. Hmm! And I spent a bitter night
Fearing your morning face.
Ber. It was my soul's
Birth-night.
Osw. God bless me, you are grateful, sir.
But you've good reason. [*Looks at Ardia*] I had no such mate
To make the dark hours fly.
Ber. Pray speak to her.
Osw. In my good time.
Ber. Nay, now!
Osw. The day is long.
I shall be gentle, for I owe her much
Who gives me back my son. Come to our guests.
Ber. Does Frederick——
Osw. Ay, he knows all, and bears
No grudge.
Ber. Knows all?
Osw. He clapped my plot as though
His own thick noll had hatched it.
Ber. And the princess——

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Osw. You see her smile? There's answer for you.
Come!
No blush! Put on a face. Your bridal news
Shall sauce our banquet.
[*They move to guests*]
Fred. [*To Bertrand*] Greet you, sir! But why
So pale, my lord? I fear me you have spent
A sleepless night.
Ber. Ay, as the stars.
A Lord. The stars?
He winked then, by the rood!
Ber. What do you say?
Lord. I say the stars do wink, most gracious prince.
Osw. Come, find your seats, my friends! Yet two of us,
Lord Charilus and my unworthy self
Must keep our feet till we have drunk the wine
Made sacrosanct by one night's rest upon
The Virgin's altar.
[*Bertrand places Ardia's seat by her father, who stands at the left of Oswald*]
You, fair Berenice,
Sit at my right, and on your other side
The graceless prince of Suli begs for room.
Bere. He beg, my lord? I have not heard his tongue,
And for his eyes, I fear no leek of Wales
Could pull a beggar's tear from them to oil
This suit. But he is welcome.
Ber. [*Taking seat by her*] Thank you, lady.
[*When all are seated save Charilus and Oswald a priest enters bearing a chalice of wine which he places on table before Oswald*]
Osw. This is the cup by angels visited
In night's deep hours. Herein they dropped the peace
Of Heaven, which Charilus and I shall take
Into our hearts. I know in truth it holds

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Sweet peace for me—the peace that thirty years
My veins have ached for. Charilus, what say you?
Char. My heart can hold no more of peace than now
Doth fill it, but I drink with you, my lord.
[*Drinks from goblet which Oswald has filled from chalice, and Oswald drinks from goblet filled by Charilus*]
Osw. [*Dropping his glass*] Is peace a fire?
I' faith, this kindles me!
Thou smileless priest, take off the Virgin's cup!
You think it needs another blessing, sir,
Since my bold hand has touched it? Out with you!
[*Exit priest with chalice*]
That pinch-face has seen hell and fasts to keep
The ghost down. I'll not fast. Set to, my friends.
Fill up your bowls, for I've a health for you.
We drink to Berenice, bride to be
Of Bertrand, prince of Suli and my son!
A Lord. [*As all lift their glasses*]
We pledge the bride of Bertrand—Berenice!
Ber. Drink not, my lords, till you have changed that name
To Ardia, daughter of our noble guest,
Lord Charilus!
Fred. [*Rising*] If this be sport, Earl Oswald,
A world of groans shall pay for 't!
Bere. [*In mock swoon*] Oh . . . I faint. . . .
[*Her ladies help her*]
Osw. You bawling ass! You thousand times a fool!
Ber. [*To Oswald*] You've woven a maze about me, and I'm blind
With 't, yet I see to pluck one truth,—my bride
Is Ardia. No other under Heaven! My lords,
It is the wine——
Osw. Would then 'twere in your throat!
Is this the riddle of your morning smile?

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Your fair compliance, soft submission? Sir,
By my heart's blood, I'll give you to the sword
Ere you shall make me father to a drab—
The spoil of your own lust, the— What, you draw?
Ay, strike me down! Let me be first to fall
Beneath your mighty sword! The rust has lain
A lifetime on it, and a father's blood
May cleanse it bright as Heaven!
Ber. O, my Christ!
Osw. Yea, call on him, and he will hear thee too,
Who honorest so thy father!
[*Bertrand stands speechless*]
Now, my lords,
Since he no longer brays, I have a tale
To tell you. I, too, had a father, though
The world has long forgot him.
Fred. No, my friend.
Well do I bear in mind his fair, proud face,
And glory of his arms.
Osw. He was struck down
Because a minion, straying from the hearth,
Looked on his beauty with her nestling eyes.
Fred. For no more cause?
Osw. I swear it. Friends, if death
Were the cold price for kissing of a jade,
Who here would be alive? For so slight sin
Was my brave father murdered. Charilus, speak!
Was not the princely heart of John of Clyffe
Ripped with a hate-keen sword,—the sword of him
Who claimed the lordship of those rebel lips
That chose my father liege?
Char. It is too true.
Osw. Who better knows? Say that a wilding flies
The builded bower, hearing a lordlier song
Pass on the wind than her dull mate can tune,

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Must then the singer die, who scarcely knows
His song is heard, or that a bold wing follows?

Char. Whether the earl of Clyffe sang then to woo,
As I believe, or for the love of song,
As you do say, my lord,—his death was sin,
And he who wrought that woe shed tears enough
To clear his stain, if tears may whiten souls.

Osw. A murderer's tears! But what of mine, the son's?

Ber. Your oath—your honor, sir! Where is the love
You swore should cleanse your shield?

Osw. Safe in my heart.
And burning for my father.

Ber. God of pity!

Osw. That was the love I spoke of.

Ber. All be deaf
But hell!

Osw. Hear the full tale, my friends. I swear
The earl of Clyffe died for no more offence
Than I have here set out,—and I, his only son,
Kissed his red wounds and from his breast unbound
This bloody scarf— [*taking scarf from his bosom*] that then
was crimson, now
In age-grown black bemourns my step that comes
So sluggish to revenge. For thirty years
Had passed ere I beheld his murderer,
Then face to face we stood . . . . and face to face
We stand . . . for this is he, this Charilus
Of Kidmir—peace-lipped Cain—gray hypocrite,
Whose blood is honey in his veins, whose eyes
Stare on the world as he were some bland god
Who made it and said "good."

Char. Sir, I would send
My daughter to her brothers. Grant me this.
And I am ready for what death you please.

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Ard. I will not go. One sword shall strike us both.
[*Turns to Oswald*]
But first a word to you. When Charilus falls,
Say farewell to your son. He pledged his life
To my two brothers for our father's safety,
And you, who know him least, yet know he'll keep
That pledge.

Osw. What, creature, will you lie?

Ard. I speak
The truth. Strike, if you can, this gray old man,
Silvered in service to the one high God,
Sinless as sunlight, fair in sweetened age,—
Let forth his sainted blood, and Bertrand lives
No longer than the shortest time between
Suli and Kidmir.

Osw. That's a lifetime then!
He shall not step! I'll have him hung with chains
Till he is fast as rooted oaks in earth!

Ber. [*Stunned*] A guest betrayed. . . . .

Osw. Betrayed? I promised him
Such treatment as he gave my blood. And he
Shall have it—death!

Char. Peace be my heir!

Ber. [*Takes stand by Charilus*] Death, sir?
First break this sword! Thy sin must be unnamed
Until the angel who doth write thee damned
Gives it foul christening. I break my pledge.
I will not go to Kidmir. Here I'll give
My life for Charilus.

Char. No blow for me!
O, may I unavengèd lie forgot,
And my forgiving blood make barren ground
Alive with asphodel——

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Ber. Nay, I will strike,
Though a father's sword meet mine!
[*Charilus trembles, and supports himself by Ardia's arm*]
Osw. Commend me, stars!
You counselled well. [*To Bertrand*] Fool, do not draw.
There's none
Will run against you. Charilus is dead,
And by a way more sure. His holy goblet
Held one rich drop the angels put not there
Nor Virgin blessed. See how he pales—and stares—
And cannot get his voice? So are we spared
A swan-song homily trickling through his beard.
Be off, old pray-lip—off, and take with you
Your cat-foot peace and milky piety!
I serve a vengeful God who armeth men
For his own wars!
Ber. Heaven, draw thy clouds about thee!
[*Charilus dies in Ardia's arms*]
Osw. He's dead! The air of earth is sweet again.
I have no enemy!
Ber. [*Looking up from the body*] You have no son.

[*Curtain*]

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ACT III

SCENE: *On Kidmir Pass. Moonlight paling to dawn. Ardia alone, struggling up the Pass.*

Ard. [*Looking back*] They do not follow. I am safe
from that. [*Sits on a rock*]
Why should I climb? There is no rest up there.
But there is death, mayhap,—and that is worth
The sorest climbing. O, my father dear,
Is't thy dead self so heavy on my heart?
Thou shouldst be light upon thy spirit wings,
And give me of thy freedom.
[*Gaina enters from above*]
Gaina, hast found
The spring?
Gaina. 'Tis farther up.
Ard. More steps.
Gaina. Wait here.
Barca will bring you drink. Nay, sit you still.
Ard. I must. How this weak body masters us,
Cooling the bravest will that in strong limbs
Might dance to any goal! Yet do we say
The will is lord, whose flush is in the blood
And fades wi' the paling body. By that lie
We cling to Heaven and immortality.
. . . O, I am lost so deep I need not fear
The farthest bolt of God! Out, out the pale
Of his concern!
Gaina. Why now, honey dear!
A sip of fine spring water and you'll be
A lark o' the morning! All's not bad, I say.

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There's Banissat would marry you to-morrow!
What pretty words he spoke, and took us in
Like a good father—but I saw him look!
And he were shaved he'd have a merry eye.
Such meal and honey! *I've* a thankful tooth!
Come now, what say you? Run from such a fortune,
And stumbling is no matter. Ay, a trip
Or two were well enough.
Ard. Yes, foolish 'twas
To fly from Banissat.
Gaina. You know it? Well, well,
If it's your own right mind you've run to, dearie,
There's no harm done past mending.
Ard. [*Taking a small dagger from her dress*]
This had saved
My feet these weary steps.
Gaina. Sweet Mary, save us!
Wouldst slay a prince for loving thee?
Ard. No, wretch.
I could not take another's life though 'twere
Of all the world the foulest.
Gaina. Bless the lass!
Ard. But out of pity I could take my own.
Why should my heart beat on and labor so
For merest leave to beat again?
Gaina. Now, now!
[*Enter Barca*]
Here's Barca, praise the saints! Now you'll take heart!
[*Ardia takes gourd from Barca and drinks*]
Ard. Thanks, Barca. But there's misery in the draught
That makes me keen again. I fear me I'll
Yet hope.
Barca. Will you walk on?
Ard. Yes, come.

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Barca. [*Listening*] What's that?
A noise below!
Ard. Some one from Banissat!
I'll not be taken!
Barca. Come aside, my lady.
Here is good hiding.
[*They go behind a great rock half hidden by cedars. Bertrand enters below. Ardia steps out and stands before him. He kneels*]
Ber. Spirit, hast come for me? I'll join thee, love,
When I have climbed this peak and met the sword
That sets my honor free.
Ard. Nay, rise, my lord.
Ber. [*Rising*] Thy living self? Here in the night alone?
Ard. Barca is here, and Gaina.
Ber. Sweet, the moon
Makes thee so fair.
Ard. [*Smiling*] Was I not always fair?
Ber. [*Embracing her*] My living love! Sit here,—and now thy story.
Ard. I'll shorten it to get to thine.
Ber. You had
The dagger that I sent you? [*She shows it to him*]
My sole gift
To love.
Ard. O, it was dear as death then seemed
To me!
Ber. Cast it away.
Ard. No, for love's sake
I'll keep it, and it shall do no work save God's.
Listen . . . . it prophesies . . . . I'll need it yet.
Ber. O, I was mad to send it! Would you wreck
This tent set fair upon the soul's long road,
By pain-craft wrought of every whiter dream,
Where God may sit with us and map the winds

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That forward blow and back, the paths laid free
To His far end, and those where blind walls rise
Breast-piled with thwarted dust? Dear soul of me,
Would we know Heaven we must listen here,
And one word lost may mean a path all dark
When we fare outward. This is not for you,
This fear-born blade. Away with it!
[*She clasps it closer*]
Is not
Your danger past?

Ard. Not while Avesta loves.

Ber. O God! But tell me now the full, foul story,—
Yet not all foul, since you are here alive.

Ard. Your father——

Ber. I've no father!

Ard. —sent me forth
With my two servants. When we reached Avesta,
The prince met us with welcome, much too warm
Methought, so in the night we stole away
And reached the pass—all with some wit and care,
As you shall know hereafter. Now your word.

Ber. I was imprisoned.

Ard. Yes, I know.

Ber. A guard
Gave me his sword. I fought the others.

Ard. Fought?

Ber. And killed. Look on this blade.
A brother's blood.

Ard. My love!

Ber. At last I am Earl Oswald's son!

Ard. My Bertrand! [*Drawing aside his cloak*]
You are wounded! Vairdelan!

Ber. That name is no more mine.

Ard. How did you pass
Avesta?

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Ber. The guards were friends of Vairdelan.
I used the stainless name that I had lost.
O, I have lied to keep my word, and slew
That I might die!
Ard. Might die? You mean . . . my brothers.
They must be merciful.
Ber. With Charilus slain?
Ard. O, me! I too shall die. And that is best,
If anything we do be worst or best.
I've read within my father's secret script
That earth shall lose its heart of fire, and lie
Dead-cold and dark with no green thing upon it.
Then this black crust shall bear no form of man,
Nor trace of him. Why then such ceaseless pain
To look a little longer on the sun,
When he who seals his eyes this day with dust
But leagues with time to reach the journey's end
Without the journey's ache?
Ber. Hast lost thy faith?
Ber. My heart, say earth must be its own still grave,
Our destiny lies farther. But were life
A march to naught, I'd choose it for the sake
Of one bright wonder by the way—your love,
My Ardia.
Ard. You love me, yet would die. Thou 'rt mine!
And I will hold thee, yea, on this warm earth,
Not in some strange and tearless world!
[*While they speak Barca moves up the pass and listens*]
Barca. My lord?
Ber. Ay, Barca?
Barca. Men are on the pass.
Ard. Above?
My brothers! Oh!
Ber. I go to meet them.
Ard. Stay!

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Ber. They shall not come to me. I go to them.
My honor, love, my honor!
Ard. O, men, men!
You build a shrine to love and ask us fling
Our lives, our souls into it. Once within,
The door forever shut, there sits a god,
A monster-god, your honor, and we must sue
For barest room to stand or crouch or kneel
Where by your oaths we should be sovereign.
Ber. The shrine itself is honor, dear, my heart.
That gone, we have indeed no holy place
To shelter love. Was 't not yourself who said
That man to man must keep his pledge?
Ard. Ah me,
That shining night! That night of golden wings!
And now comes this. Can such two nights be born
In the same world, and but one sun between?
[*Bertrand staggers*]
You're bleeding still!
Ber. Fast, fast.
Ard. My veil——
I'll wrap you with it! [*Binds wound*]
Ber. Thanks, for I would live
To die upon their swords.
Ard. Wait, wait, my lord!
O, do not meet them in their first deep rage——
Ber. Farewell!
Ard. You shall not see them till my prayers
Have turned their hearts from blood.
Ber. Part thou with hope
And pain will leave thee too. That is the wrench,
Not death.
Ard. Stay, stay! Are there not miracles yet?
I'll hide you yonder till——

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Ber. They come!

[*Hurries up pass, staggers and falls*]

Ard. He faints!

The miracle begins! Here, Barca, Gaina,
Bear him aside. Be swift! Then come to me.
O, gently, Barca! Haste!

[*Barca draws Bertrand behind the rocks*]

He shall be saved!
Thou'lt not deny me, Heaven! O, forget
That ever I blasphemed Thee!

[*Enter, above, Biondel and Vigard*]

Vig. Who is here?

Ard. My brothers!

Vig. Ardia, by my life!

Bion. 'Tis she.
What do you here?

Ard. I go to you. Where else
Shall I find shelter in a world now bare
Save where your hearts make gentle room for me?

Bion. What do you mean? Where is our father?
Speak!

Ard. You have not heard? Why then do you go down?

Bion. For word of Charilus. No messenger
Has come. All night we watched. What can you say
More than this fearful meeting tells? No word?
Are you the ghost you look? Is Charilus safe?

Ard. Safe as yon Heaven would have him. He is dead.

[*Silence*]

You loved him, though you went another way
To find your God.

Bion. Our father dead? O, sister,
Not cold, not still, not silent to his sons,
Who loved his voice even when they most forsook it!

Ard. Oswald betrayed us.

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Vig. O, my sword, 'tis thou
Shalt split his heart, though every spear in Suli
Then pierce my own! [*Going*]
Bion. Stay, Vigard!
Vig. Earth is fire!
Can you be still upon it? Where is Bertrand
With his deep oaths? O, coward! I will seek him——
Ard. No need. He'll come to you.
Bion. He'll keep his oath,
You think?
Ard. I know he will.
Vig. So knew you too
That Charilus was safe. Call him to life,
And we'll believe you yet!
Bion. How died our father?
[*Ardia weeps*]
No matter now. And Oswald cast you out?
Afoot?
Gaina. Ay, so he did! I'll answer that!
Ard. He sent us under guard.
Gaina. Ay, but afoot!
And 'twas a trudge to Avesta. O, the day!
Bion. Prince Banissat gave you no help?
Gaina. No help?
Who said so? There's a prince! He drew his sword,
And swore he'd drive Earl Oswald to the sea,
And said "Avesta's yours,"—that to my mistress,
She then bedraggled and so full of tears
She had no words to thank him. I did that!
Then we had sup and bed, and when my bones
Were sweet with sleep, why we must up again
And tug it to the peak.
Bion. [*To Ardia*] He sheltered you!
Then there was hope, which you have trampled down
By this mad flight.

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Ard. I dared not think the prince
Would make my bitter fortunes his. In you
Lay my defence, and to your love I came.
You must make peace with Oswald. Yes, my brothers,
Although you write it with our father's blood.
He is all powerful. When Bertrand comes——
Vig. Ha, when he comes!
Bion. What then?
Ard. You may demand
Whate'er you will of Oswald, if you spare
The dear life of his son.
Vig. I'll have that life
And Oswald's too!
Ard. He'll make you any terms——
Vig. Ay, any terms, and keep none, once his son
Is safe.
Bion. [*Looking down the pass*] Who comes? — with gleaming lances? Ah . . .
The prince!
Vig. By Allah, he!
[*It is now dawn. Ardia steps back into shadow as Banissat and followers enter. His retainers wait at entrance below while he advances*]
Ban. Good-morrow, friends.
Bion. Hail to you, Banissat!
Ban. I seek a dove
That fled my hand last night. Has 't flown your way?
Bion. Our sister is with us.
Ban. Then search ends here.
Bion. Her flight meant no ingratitude, my lord.
Her father's arms grown cold, she came to ours
By the shortest way, bringing her honor home
Where none might question it.
Ban. We love her more
For watchful care of what to us is precious

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As to herself. Heaven-pure must be the bride
Of Banissat, and tainted Heaven will put
The earth to blush ere she will bring us shame.
I offer her my princedom.

Ard. [*Stepping out*] One whose veil
Is lost? Whose face is common to the eyes
Of beggars by the road?

Ban. O, bald and bitter!
But did not one, our Lady of Paradise,
Walk with bare brow among our counsellors?
And you are pure as she. Who dares to soil
The chosen of Banissat with whisper that
He saw you on this journey, forfeits eyes
And tongue. So silence shall give burial deep
To every slander.

Ard. You will not forget.

Ban. Yourself shall be my dear oblivion.
For Beauty keeps no records, has no past;
Her arms engird love's moment, and there is
No other time.

Ard. Nay, Beauty's history
Is writ beneath her bloom, and when that goes
The deep, uncovered scars are hated more
Because of love that kissed them unaware.
I dare not wed you, but say that I dared,
Wouldst grasp my broken fortunes when you need
Strong Antioch's staff and sceptre to make good
Your gates 'gainst Oswald? And I've heard, my lord,
That Antioch's daughter is a prize you seek.

Ban. Be not o'er-jealous, Ardia of the Stars,
For Antioch shall serve thee. There my suit
Is but a fair appearance,—there I woo
To make thy state secure, and thou shalt be
Bride of my heart unrivalled.

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Ard. Hear me then!
I am betrothed to Bertrand. He is sworn
To me as I to him.
Vig. Death to your tongue!
You'd wed your father's slayer?
Ard. I would wed
Lord Bertrand. [*Kneels to Biondel*] Brother!
Vig. Give no ear to her!
Ard. If you would save Avesta and yourselves,
Make peace with Oswald. Trust not Antioch.
When Bertrand comes——
Vig. He will not come! He's not
A fool as thou!
Ard. He comes!
Vig. [*Lifting his sword*] Then here's his welcome!
[*Bertrand comes out and walks slowly to the group. Vigard, amazed, lowers his sword*]
Ber. My friends, well met. You cut my journey short.
[*Gives his sword to Biondel*]
Bion. You have come back . . . . to death?
Ber. The blow, my lord.
Your work is wellnigh done. An easy stroke
Will finish it.
Vig. And whose is that?
Bion. Not mine.
I do condemn him, but can lift no hand
To seal mine order.
Vig. I am not so weak.
This blow for Charilus!
Ard. [*Staying him*] If Bertrand dies
My honor goes unto a grave so deep
No shoot of green will ever from it spring
For the world's eye to light on.
Bion. You make much
Of broken troth. There's many a maid has lived
In wedded honor with a second choice.

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Ard. But I may not.
Bion. Peace, sister.
Ard. Let him live,
And Suli's glory will enwrap my name
Stainless and safe.
Ban. 'Tis safe with me. Ay, safer.
Let Antioch enlist with me, and I
Shall wear the name of Suli with my own.
Ard. You've yet to hear . . . you do not know, my lord. . . .
Ber. Sweet, plead no more. Let me go on to Heaven
If 't be God wills his gates shall ope to me.
Vig. You'll stop in hell a thousand years or so!
Ard. Wait! I will tell——
Vig. You've said too much!
Bion. Speak, Ardia.
Ard. In Suli castle where I was betrothed
To Bertrand, just one sun agone—but one—
He spent the night with me.
Vig. She lies!
Ard. Say now
If Banissat, or any lord save Bertrand,
Will make me wife.
Bion. Must I believe you?
Ban. No.
A woman's trick.
Ard. There's proof. Ask whom you will
Of Oswald's train—the lords who saw me cast
From Suli's door, too vile for word or touch.
Ask any trooper, jesting by the way,
And hear my name made foul. The army rings
With it. Ask any gossip of the tents——
Ban. O, stop her tongue! It thunders on me! All
The air is storm! Peace, or I'll strike her down!

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Bion. This seals your death, Lord Bertrand. Now my hand
Is hot and willing.

[*Enter a messenger below. He gives a packet to Banissat*]

Messenger. Antioch sends this,
O, prince!

Bion. [*To Bertrand*] I had your word above all oaths
That you would guard our sister. When the priest
Strips bare the shrine, not outraged God or man
Shall show him mercy.

Ard. He is innocent!
'Twas Oswald's plot to cast me in the dust—
And there I lie where all the world may see—
But Bertrand's soul is guiltless——

Vig. Guiltless! Tush!
Your puzzle's clear. [*To Biondel*] She dies with him.

Ard. I die
If Bertrand dies. But, oh my brothers, we
Are young—we love—will you not let us live?

Bion. [*To Vigard*] 'Tis best she dies.

Ber. You will not dare——

Bion. The prince
Shall be her judge.

Ban. First let us speak aside,
For Antioch fails us, and we've more to weigh
Than the quick death of this too-guilty pair.

[*Banissat, Biondel, and Vigard go off above*]

Ber. I have brought death upon you.

Ard. Life, 'tis life
Now beating in the dawn! What music! Hear it!
O, we shall live, my lord, and live together!

Ber. In Heaven, love.

Ard. True, for this planet too,
Ay, even this earth, is set in Heaven as deep
As any star. 'Tis we are heaven to eyes

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In other worlds, and would be to our own
Could we believe. O, hope with me, my Bertrand!
No, no, not hope, whose other half is doubt,
And to its dark and fearful double owes
Its very radiance, too, too unlike
Belief's transmuting sun!
Ber. Ah, love, no man ere broke
Undrained his cup, or brewed again those drops
To his desire——
Ard. Nay, every man is new
In destiny, his star his own, and foots
Unmeasured paths.
Ber. On mortal feet.
Ard. Be 't so,
Each birth is a high venture of the soul
Feeling an untried way for deity's dream,
And none may know where th' deep and twilight trail
Shall flash with God-rift, and the dawn be his.
Ber. O, bravest, bow thy head——
Ard. Nay, nay, my lord!
Lock up your spirit, let mine rule this hour,
Or be with me the flame of faith that leaps
To deed in God. For we do help him, dear.
Our parcelled strength is whole and new in His,
A power born that touches us again,
Breeding our greater self that yet gives back
His own increase, until the way is strewn
Even with his miracles and ours. So works
The unending drama out, where every act
Begets an act yet greater than itself.
Ber. Let me but kiss thy hands.
Ard. You will not help?
You'll not believe? Is it so strange
That you should live?
Ber. That hate should let me live.

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Ard. Is it more strange that hate should grow love-still,
Than that the wind should cease, as now it does,
To strip the bloom from yonder bough, and lie
Unfelt within its silent place? More strange
That life should keep its flow in your warm veins
Than that the sun now creeping on the peaks
Should wander down and on and lay in gold
The valleys of the world, moved by no hand
We see or name, but know, but know!

[*Biondel, Vigard, and Banissat re-enter*]

Ard. He lives!

Bion. He lives. Speak the conditions, prince.

Ban. [*To Bertrand*] Your life
Is spared that she whose name is lost
May wear your own. You shall remain on Kidmir peak,
And make her yours by every priestly rite
With open, fair observance. Then Earl Oswald
Must greet as daughter one he vilely mocked
From his proud door, and far and wide acclaim her
Princess of Suli. Will his love for you
So bow his heart?

Ber. I may not speak for him.

Ard. He will consent.

Ban. And, further, he shall give
To Biondel the governorship of Ilon.
And grant Ramoor to Vigard.

Ber. Not for price
Of my poor life will Oswald yield these towns
To any save a Christian.

Ban. So we think.
And therefore will these lords forswear
The Prophet for your Christ.

Ber. Such sudden change——

Vig. Not sudden, sir. We've long debated it

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In secret talk, but loved too well our prince
To so forsake his banner.
Bion. Now the day
Is here when as his true and Christian friends
We may best serve him, and yet keep the peace
For which our father died.
Ber. He is alive again
If you be true. Though wonder is in the hour
I will not stare or question.
Ard. Question nothing.
Do you not live?
Bion. The prince will summon Oswald
To earliest parley, and make our offer known.
Ban. Nor lose an instant. Here begins my journey.
[*Signs to retainers who start down the pass*]
Bion. We need not give you thanks when you've our hearts
That hold them.
Ban. By the sunset hour the earl
Shall give me answer. Meet me in Avesta
'Tween dark and light.
Bion. We will, my lord.
[*Exit Banissat*]
Ber. O, strange!
Will he keep faith?
Bion. If you must doubt his heart,
Trust his affliction. Antioch lost to him,
What can he do but smile on Christian Oswald?
By that same argument I am condemned,
But beg a respite till this pushing peace,
Upsprung in haste, may bear you buds of proof.
Ber. What world is this?
Vig. Climb you no farther, sir.
Your wounds forbid. Our servants shall be sent
To bear you up.

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Bion. Ay, wait you here, my lord.

[*Exeunt Biondel and Vigard above*]

Ber. Love, see the sun!

Ard. It is my heart, my heart!

[*Curtain*]

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ACT IV

SCENE: *Same as first act. An altar near wall, left. Seven maidens putting fresh garlands about the hall.*

Mylitta. She must be dressed by this. Come, let us sing!
Mirimond. No, wait! Our part is yet undone.
Here hangs
A withered garland.
Alenia. Here another. See!
And there! Well, we are slack.
Eudora. Who would not be?
We've cause for sleepy wits and fingers too,
With seven days and nights of revelling.
Garla. And Charilus warm in 's grave.
Myrana. He'll be no colder
Let come a hundred months. Ten years, ten days,
'Tis all the same i' the ground.
Daphne. And yet, I think
The daughter smiles too soon.
Mylitta. Troth, I would smile
For such a lord if all the world beside
Were wrapped in shroud.
Mirimond. I would the English knights
Were come! Full fifty, Barca said, would ride
From Suli.
Mylitta. I know you, chit. Your eyes will find
Their way.
Mirimond. Mayhap not all of us will take
The homeward ship for Corinth. Did we think

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When we set sail we'd come in time to see
Our Ardia married?
Mylitta. You will dream.
Garla. If dreams
Were men, what maid would go unwed? Not you,
Mylitta.
Myrana. Come, our song! 'Tis time!
Eudora. Come, all!
[*They sing by Ardia's door*]

Mornings seven have we been
Wardens at thy door;
Now thy lord shall enter in,
And we come no more.

Mornings seven have we strewn
Lilies at thy door;
Now the virgin watch is done,
And we come no more.

Mornings seven have we sung
At thy maiden door;
Now the seventh morn is rung,
And we come no more.

[*Door opens and Ardia comes out. Gaina follows*]
Ard. A kiss to all! Who's happier here than I
Shall have my place.
Mirimond. We'll ask Lord Bertrand that.
Thou 'rt no more mistress of your yeas and nays.
Ard. O, but I am! I have a votary now
Who'll make my words his wishes and himself
Bring them to pass.
Mylitta. No doubt. You'll cough
In oracles. He'll puzzle o'er your sneeze

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That he may do its meaning. I have heard
Such husbands do inhabit a green moon,
And one may come to earth.
Ard. Kiss me, Mylitta!
Naught else will stop your mouth. O, dearest girls,
No father's here to give me to my lord,
And yet I smile, I wed. For why?—his love
Is not in earth with his dear body. No!
'Tis all about me here, bathing my heart,
Now on my brow, now whispers at my ear,
Now runs before my eyes to make a light
Where they would rest. He loves this day as I do!
Yet I had stayed this busking marriage
Had not my brothers pressed me to such haste
And peace not waited on it. Think, dear maidens,
Peace everywhere! Avesta safe and free,
And Oswald's sword in sheath—
What is that chanting?
Gaina. [*Looking from parapet*] A train comes up the heights.
Mylitta. The English Lords!
[*Enter Barca, left*]
Ard. Barca, who comes?
Barca. Prince Banissat, my lady,
With all his court attending.
Mirimond. Banissat!
This is a Christian wedding.
Ard. We are at peace.
Barca. He brings you gifts. Your brothers go to meet him.
Ard. Where is Lord Bertrand?
Barca. Near at hand. He comes
This way. [*Exit Barca, left*]
Ard. My girls, wouldst see what dainties lie
In yonder chamber?

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Mylitta. Nay, we'll wait.
Ard. Moonstones
For golden hair—crescents and amber stars
For tresses dark——
Girls. O! O!
Ard. Veils of spun silver——
[*Maidens buzz through door right*]
Ard. Go, give them all!
Gaina. All, mistress? Not——
Ard. Go, go!
[*Exit Gaina. Bertrand enters, left. He is in princely costume*]
Ber. Art found, my heaven?
Ard. Thou 'st not a fear thy Heaven
Is lost in me?
Ber. A doubt were my soul's shame.
[*Points up the heights*]
Does not yon giant cross arise to say
Christ reigns on Kidmir? Far as Suli plain
Men see the sun upon its silver sides
And hands upborne in prayer forget the sword
That sleeps unwakened.
Ard. Will it sleep for long?
Ber. Ay, else your father's death were devils' sport,
Not Heaven's will.
Ard. What word to-day from Oswald?
Ber. You name him?
Ard. Is he not our father?
Ber. O,
God's angel thou, not mine!
Ard. Does Biondel
Now wear the crown of Ilon?
Ber. That's confirmed.
And Vigard has Ramoor.
Ard. They profit much
By their new faith.

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Ber. Do they not spare my life?
So Oswald gives these crowns. You think he pays
Too dear?
Ard. O, barest alms! I'd have the earth,
No less,—then want the sun,—ay, circling heaven,
And yet be beggared losing thee! But they
Must wear their purple o'er a Christian heart.
I would not doubt . . . and yet. . . .
Ber. They are the sons
Of Charilus.
Ard. And Banissat?
Ber. He vows
An endless peace with Suli.
Ard. And you are Suli.
Why am I fearful, knowing doubt is death?
Ber. Come, love, look down—nay, farther, toward the sea.
That sprawling mass that darkens now the plain,
Seeming to hugely breathe and cloud-like move,
Is Oswald's army making feast to-day,
For I, the prince, go wiving. Now I seem
To hear our names joined high in Heaven's air,
And Christ, too, listens smiling, knowing one land,
One throne is his forever. Sweet, 'twas he
Drew me from sheltered cell and flowered garth
To be his sovereign servant. He it was
Who called through you, who cried in Charilus' death
To wake my soul that shall not sleep again
Till Love has garnered all these eastern lands.
Ard. Amen, my husband-knight! I am content
To be your love next Christ. Within your heart
'Twill be sweet gleaning where he walks before.
Ber. These words be your sole dower, for they hold
More sun for me than shining gold!
Ard. The guests!
Do you not hear them? Leave me now, my lord.

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Ber. Thank patience and my stars, we reach the end
Of these stale ceremonies! Seven days
Of long, superfluous rites to make you mine
When our first kiss did wed us!
Ard. [*Mocking*] So ungentle
To your proud honors, sir? Nay, it is fit
Your wedding be as famous as your name,
O, Prince of Suli!
[*Voices heard, left*]
Go, to come again!
[*Exit Bertrand, right. Ardia turns to enter her room and faces Vigard who comes on left. She draws her veil*]
Vig. Stay, sister.
Ard. Would you have me seen?
Vig. [*Throws back her veil*] Art fair
Again? As Kidmir skies!
Ard. It is my joy.
[*Enter left, Biondel, Banissat, and lords. Banissat pauses. The others pass off, right*]
Vig. [*Taking Ardia's hand to detain her*] We have surprised our sister.
Ban. Blest the hour!
Now may I lay this gift within her hand—
Poor gift, that has no worth until that hand
Caresses it to splendor.
[*Kneels, offering her a small packet*]
Ard. [*Taking packet*] Courteous prince,
My thanks. And more than thanks that you should climb
Kidmir's uneasy steep to dearly grace
This day—for smiles of friends, more than fair gifts,
Do best adorn my bridal. [*Draws her veil and moves right*]
Ban. Night is come,
And through her mist the stars! [*Exit Ardia*]

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Vig. Her bloom is washed
Somewhat with tears for Charilus, but she
Will flower again.
Ban. Now by the Prophet's soul
He who has kissed her lips had better 've kissed
A flame of hell than so have touched
What shall be mine!
Vig. As thou dost love revenge,
Be patient.
Ban. Patience to the ox, to beasts
That dream 'twixt cud and whip! Am I not man?
Vig. You have endured, by truth.
Ban. Endured!
Vig. And now
Revenge! Ere night yon braggart cross shall bear
A burden that will start Earl Oswald's eyes
When he looks up from Suli plain.
Ban. This day
Shall see it! Come, once more let us look down.
See where the hosts of Allah charge upon
The sottish infidel! All yet is well.
The banner o'er Avesta signals still
The Prophet wins!
Vig. And when the tower of Suli
Gleams with the hoisted crescent, we shall know
Oswald is taken.
Ban. Ha! There's no way out!
The powers of Ilon, Avesta, and Ramoor,
Pen him in bloody triangle. Old rat,
You're in the trap! I should be there, not here,—
There at his throat——
Vig. Nay, here, my lord, you'll have
Your dearest triumph. Please you now, go in.
I'll watch here for the sign.

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Ban. Your watch be short.

[*Exit, right. Re-enter Ardia*]

Ard. [*Holding out a flaming ornament*] Brother, see this!
The jewel of the house
Of Banissat. 'Tis sacred to his name.
I cannot take it, and he dare not give it.

Vig. It seems he dared.

Ard. What does he mean, dear Vigard?

Vig. To honor Suli's princess as most fit.

Ard. I tremble still from his deep look of fire,
And when I saw this burn methought his eye
Was yet upon me.

Vig. Fool, go to your maidens!

[*Enter Barca, left, with Ramunin*]

Vig. You're late, my man.

Ram. And yet in season, sir. [*Points up the heights*]
The cross is bare.

Vig. Get you within.

[*Exeunt Barca and Ramunin, left*]

Now, sister—
What, do you faint?

Ard. That face! Ramunin's face.
I saw it once, and shuddered many a day
Remembering it. The public crucifier,
Who serves the bloody prince of Antioch.
The same. What does he here upon this day
Of all the days of time?

Vig. 'Tis by your wish
That Kidmir gates are open.

Ard. And by yours.

Vig. Ay, let the world be witness you are made
The honored bride of Suli.

Ard. But Ramunin?
He said the cross was bare. Why such a jest

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As horrid as his life? [*Looking out*] And all the knights
That were to come from Oswald—where are they?

Vig. They drank too deep last night for journeying
Up Kidmir road—or else they dare not cross
This outraged portal.

Ard. Have we not forgiven?
Ah, what is there? Look, Vigard, do you see?
A floating crescent!

Vig. Where?

Ard. O'er Suli tower.
O, this is Oswald's greeting to our house,
Better than any band of armèd knights!
He lifts the Prophet's banner to his towers,
Even as you set the Savior's crucifix
On Kidmir! Now the one eternal God
Lives in his sign when cross and crescent smile
Love-set in the same heaven!

Vig. Allah be praised!

Ard. And Christ—forget not Christ!

Vig. We'll make an end now.
[*Exit, right*]

Ard. An end? Am I a bride—or sacrifice?

[*Goes in, right, at sound of approaching music. Enter, left, young musicians playing flutes and harps. They pause before altar, cross to right and seat themselves about Ardia's door. Guests enter, filling rear of hall, and parapet. A maiden comes on, dancing the grain-dance and scattering sesame. At the close of dance, Ardia's maidens enter, each bearing a lighted candle which she places on the altar. A Greek chant is heard as priest approaches left. All wait his entrance, and the curtain falls, rising again on the close of the ceremony. Bertrand and Ardia stand centre. An aged priest at altar. Biondel and Banissat conspicuous among the guests. Vigard not seen*]

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Bion. Is all now done?
Priest. All 's done. The spouse of Suli
May bow herself unto her master's feet,
Bespeaking so the love that has no wish
But service, no desire save her lord's will.
[*As Ardia would kneel, Bertrand prevents her*]
Ber. You shall not kneel.
Ard. 'Tis custom, dear my lord.
Ber. Then here it dies.
Ard. My mother did so much
For him who made her wife.
Ber. Thy knees shall bend
To God, and to none less. Reign at my side,
Princess of Suli, not my feet.
Bion. We hail
The bride of Suli!
Guests. Bride of Suli, hail!
Vig. [*Unseen*] Ho! Seize the traitor! Ho!
[*Enter Ramunin, right, and armed guards*]
Ber. Who speaks? And who
Is traitor here?
Vig. Thou, foulest murderer!
Ber. Who speaks?
Vig. Dead Charilus.
Ard. 'Tis Vigard's voice.
[*Vigard steps forth*]
What, Vigard, art thou mad? Wouldst shatter the globe
Of Heaven?
Vig. Nay, it was broken that same hour
When died our father.
Ber. Son of Charilus, speak
Your will. If you demand my life, 'tis yours.
I hold it by your gentle lease and love.
But while I ask not one poor breath for me,
I beg you pause, nor cast the innocent

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To feed the vengeful and life-reaping fire
Oswald will kindle for his hapless son.
Vig. You think no fires will burn but of his kindling?
Ard. O shame! The crescent over Suli greets
The cross on Kidmir!
Vig. Ay, the crescent flies
From Suli, thanks to faithful Moslem hands
That set it there.
Ard. Ah . . . . Moslem hands?
Vig. You fool,
To think that Oswald fluttered compliments,
When he was dreaming how he'd bid you drink
Of that same cup he gave to Charilus!
Ban. Now, dearest lady, you are safe. To-day
The Faithful battled with the infidel,
And that bright crescent is the silent sign
We have the victory. Ramoor and Ilon
With pointed sword bore down on either side
The glutted, drunken army, while in front
Avesta like a whirlwind swept——
Ard. O, traitor!
You vowed unbroken peace with Suli!
Ban. Yea,
Will keep it too, for I am Suli now.
Ard. [*To her brothers*] Were you not sworn to Christ?
Bion. We are the Prophet's.
Ard. O, Heaven, hear not this! And Oswald's knights?
Vig. Sleep in Avesta's dungeons.
Bion. Banissat,
Avesta's golden prince, speak you the doom
Of Bertrand——
Ard. Doom? O——
Ber. Do not waste the breath
A kiss may save. A thousand times, your lips!
Ard. [*To Biondel*] Let him not die!

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Vig. You'll pray soon that he may!
Speak, noble prince.
Ban. I, lord of conquered Suli,
Condemn the son of Oswald unto death
By crucifixion. Be his body nailed
Upon the cross now raised on Kidmir peak,
That Oswald may behold his groaning son,
And every Christian dog look up and see
How dies the Prophet's enemy.
[*To Ramunin*] Away!
Prick him with delicate tortures that yet leave
Him heart to heave his agony. Hear you!
If he live not three days upon the cross
Yourself shall hang beside him.
Ram. I've a hand
Has had some practice, sir.
Ban. We know it, fellow,
And therefore we employ you.
Ram. I put the nails
In young Deobus, he who hung five days
'Twixt heaven and earth, and to the fifth eve groaned
As he would pull his heart up. I've a medal
Struck by the city for it.
Ban. I will match it,
If you match me the service.
Ram. That I'll do.
These English have strong hearts—will suck at Pain
As life were in her dugs.
[*Exit Ramunin, guards, and Bertrand. Priest and guests follow. The maidens huddle at door, right*]
Bion. Sister, you stare
Too hardly on this grief. It is a woe
That Heaven smiles on, and the cure now waits
In Banissat's fair mercy. You shall be
His royal wife, and Suli's princess still.

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Vig. Speak to the prince.
Ban. Nay, let her hear my vow.
O, star of Kidmir, dear and beautiful,
I'll set thee in a bosom that shall be
A tender heaven round thee. Beat to earth
Is murmurous suspicion, and again
You shine unto the world, swept free of taint
By noble marriage with most careful rites——
Ard. I doubt, I doubt! One part, one point, one rite,
Broken in act, left gaping and divided,
One half performed, one half left all undone,
Leaves me dishonored still. She is not widowed
Who was not wife——
Vig. All's done! What more canst wish?
Ard. To lay my forehead on my husband's feet,
Which by the ancient custom of our house
Is maidhood's closing act, as 'tis the first
Of wifehood true. This thou wilt grant——
Vig. You're bound
By rites enough!
Bion. Canst stand uncertain on
So slight a matter?
Ard. Slight? Ah, you know naught
Of woman! Teach him, prince, that not a nick,
Or turn, or shade of custom would she spare
From this most holy ceremony. Wanting but
The smallest portion that gives leave to say
The measure lacks, she all her life will grieve,
Shed secret tears, and wear a blanchen face
When none knows why.
Bion. You shall not move us. Peace!
Vig. A brawling fancy!
Ard. Avesta's prince, thou who
Shalt be my lord, if any lord of earth
Be mine again, wouldst have my love, or hate?

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Ban. Thy love, fair Ardia.
Ard. Then I pray you, sir,
Move thy forbearance yet one farther step
And pluck this boon for me. 'Tis near thy hand,
And O, how small a thing for you to give,
But as the sun of all my days to me!
Without it I may die——
Ban. Speak not of death. So sweet
I'll shelter thee, Death's self must bloom
If he creep near thy bower.
Ard. May I, my lord,
Keep honored place by thee when memory mocks
That place and honor? Grant me this, but this,
And here I swear if any act of man
May move a widowed heart, mine shall grow warm
To thee!
Ban. Do you speak truth?
Ard. Believe me, sir,
So dear a thing is this for which I sue,
That he who gives it must grow dear thereby;
And if he lift to him my prostrate life,
This gentle moment shall immortal be
And sweeten every hour we pass together.
Remembering this, my captive breast shall be
His free dominion, and my lips on his,
If they know warmth, shall take it from this cause,
This first dear tenderness.
Ban. We'll please you, mistress.
Bring in the man again.
[*Exit a guard*]
Vig. I beg you, prince——
Ban. By Allah, she shall have her beggar wish,
For no more reason than she wishes it!
Vig. It is her sickish humor, sir, to look
On him again. All this wild pother means
No more than that.

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Ban. No more? We'll please her then
For our good peace to come.
Bion. A princely kindness.
[*They talk together. Ardia crosses to altar*]
Ard. Now one more miracle! God live in me,
And Christ direct my hand!
Bion. What do you say,
My sister?
Ard. But a word to mine own heart.
Ban. Nay, mine now, is it not?
Ard. So much of it
As dearest lenience may buy, my lord.
[*Bertrand is brought in guarded*]
Bion. The man is here. Now have your foolish will.
[*Ardia turns and looks at Bertrand. He is stripped of his rich dress and wears only a girdled tunic falling to his knees. Arms and feet are bare*]
Ban. [*To Bertrand*] Sir, we permit the lady of our soul
To end as her heart wills the rite that makes
Her wife and widow. Touch her not, nor speak.
[*Bertrand crosses to altar*]
Ard. Why should we touch, when souls inhabit eyes
And journey on a look? My heaven-lord,
Here is no priest to bless this act of mine,
But God will know his altar and the gift
I lay upon it. The life we thought to live—
That might have failed, and killed the dream now safe
From tarnish of the days. Earth has enough
Of blind and baffled lives, but great her need
Of dreams. And ours we leave with her, unworn,
Unpaled, warm round the love-seed she shall nurse
To million-budded life.
Bion. Come, make an end!
Ard. An end of love? The God of all the worlds
Cannot do that. Love born this darkest day

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Shall be in flower on man's millennial path
And touch his step with Heaven.
Vig. Peace! Be done!
Ard. Ay . . done. My lord, think thou art in the world
Celestial, and from there smile on me—now—
[*Draws dagger from her bosom and stabs him. He falls*]
High God, as thou art Love, I struck for thee!
[*Bends over body*]
True aim. Full in the heart. I know the place,
For there my home is—there I live—and now
My house is down, I, too, must fall——
Ban. I'll pay thee!
What hast thou done?
Ard. What done? A miracle!
Who now can harm my love?
Ban. Your promises!
Your oaths!
Ard. I'd keep them, sir—ay, every one,
If grief would let me live to be your wife.
But I am weary, and my heavy stars
Have left their skies to hang upon me here.
My veins are empty, all their strength is out.
Does 't take so much to lift this little blade
And let it fall again?
[*Biondel takes the dagger from her*]
Think you I need
So poor a thing? Nay, God has struck for me,
As I for Him. I go with Vairdelan. [*Kneels by body*]
Look on this brow, if shame will let ye look.
An angel shaped it. Ye've unfashioned here
The work of Heaven. Sweet lips, no roses left?
Your hand, my lord, and now the sinless star. [*Dies*]

[*Curtain*]

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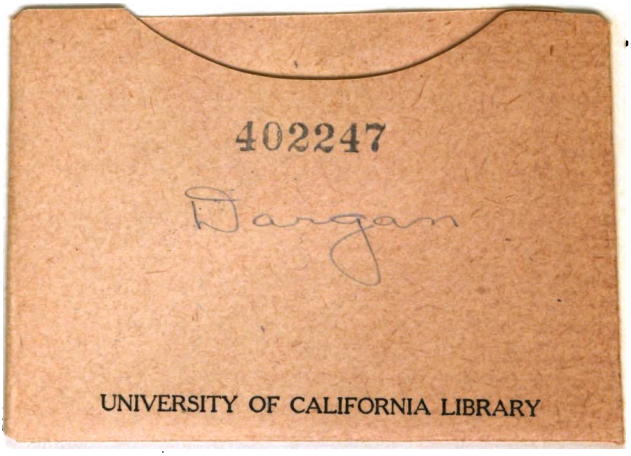

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